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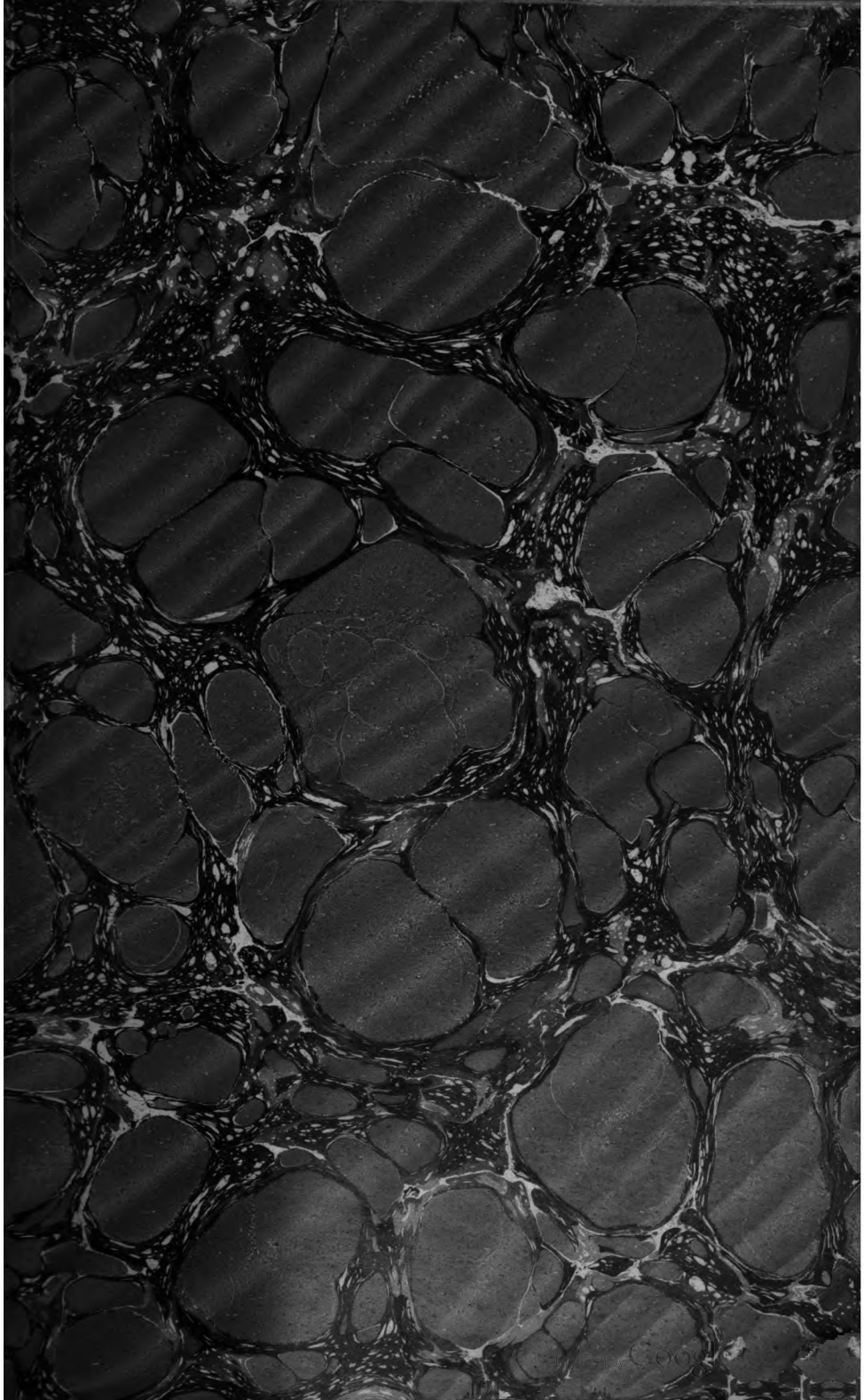
Ps. CXIX. 160.
כל דברך אמת
JOH. XVII. 17.
ὁ λογος σος ἀληθεια ἐστι.
ΑΚΡΟΓΩΝΙ
ΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ



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SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

BY

HENRY EDWARD MANNING, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF CHICHESTER.

VOLUME THE FOURTH.

Second Edition.

LONDON:

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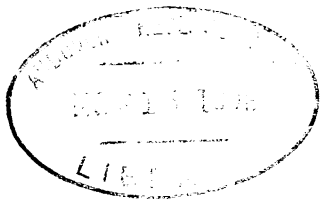

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

GEORGE AUGUSTUS,

LORD BISHOP OF NEW ZEALAND,

WHO IN AN AGE OF SOFTNESS

TAUGHT US BY LIVING EXAMPLE

THAT THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS NOT IN WORD BUT IN DEED;

THIS VOLUME,

AS AN OFFERING OF LOVE AND REVERENCE,

IS INSCRIBED

BY HIS UNWORTHY SERVANT IN CHRIST,

HENRY EDWARD MANNING.

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SERMON I.

CHRIST'S LOVE TO US OUR LAW OF LIFE.

2 Cor. v. 14.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."

IN the sight of the world, that is, of its wise, refined, easy, and prudent men, the life of St. Paul was rashness and folly. His whole mind to them was strange and unintelligible. He and the world were contradictions. In all its ways, aims, and judgments, it was set against him, and he against it. He and the world had no common language, idea, or law of life.

Once he had enjoyed all its good things,—a fair name, a great reputation, high authority, distinguished trusts, a character for learning, zeal, and strictness, the tide of popularity, and the peace of home.

And of all this he had made a voluntary wreck. In one hour he had cast it from him. All that the world counts dearest he had thrown

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away; all that the world most shrinks from he had embraced. At all times and in all places he was suffering now as an apostate and a betrayer. His own people hated him; the Heathen scorned him. In Jerusalem, where he once was held in honour, men sought to kill him; in the luxury of Corinth and in the pride of Athens he was a madman and a babbler. Such was his outward life as the world saw it, and wondered. It knew not the interpretation of the mystery. What is its true solution? "Whether we be beside ourselves," he says, "it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us."

A power the world knew not of had fallen upon him; an attraction had fastened on his inmost will, and drew him to a world unseen. That which had drawn Peter, James, and John from their boats and from their kindred, Nathanael from his shade and solitude, Matthew from his custom and commerce, Mary Magdalene from her sins, had now, in turn, fastened upon him. As he journeyed to Damascus, breathing hatred to the name of Jesus, the love of Christ fell upon him. A light, above the brightness of the sun, encompassed him. A drop of light, a drop of the heavenly flame, fell into his soul, and set him all on fire. The love of Christ smote him to the

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ground. A revelation of the love divine, of which he was a special object; a consciousness of the eternal love withstanding him in his blind career; this expelled his old self, and awakened a new principle of life. He was lifted into a new sphere of consciousness, and his whole being now flowed in a new channel. He saw himself, for the first time, in his true deformity. All that he had believed to be light turned into darkness, and his fairest purposes, in his own sight, became unclean. He beheld himself guilty, and yet beloved. He saw the love of God in His Son to be so much the more miraculous as he thrilled with a piercing conviction that he was indeed the chief of sinners.[1] Therefore he counted all his worldly gains to be but loss for Christ: all that he had been, possessed, or hoped for, was gladly cast away. His eyes had opened upon the unseen world. The true Jerusalem, the city of the Son of David, the mother of Saints, the home of Patriarchs and Prophets, floated above his path. Jesus, whom he had persecuted, stood as a King at the right hand of God, as the only and true High Priest before the true and only altar. Therefore he lived and laboured for his heavenly Master in obedience and patience, in fasting and prayer, in preaching and suffering, by night and by day, in

[1] 1 Tim. i. 15.

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perils of the deep and in perils everywhere; "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," the faint imitation of the cross by which he had been redeemed; counting life too short, and himself too worthless, as an offering to his Master's service. At the last, he laid down his life also for His name's sake. Of all this supernatural change he here gives us the true interpretation: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead,"—that is, all died with Him,—"and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."[1]

What, then, is this love of Christ of which St. Paul is speaking?

He does not here intend our love to Christ, but Christ's love to us.

We love Him, indeed, because He first loved us. Our love is the reflection of the original light,—the heavenly ray bent back again towards its source; and where this love towards Him exists, it becomes a motive of perpetual service. But this is not St. Paul's intention: he is here speaking of the motive of that motive. What is it that awakens our love to Him, but His love first to us? Love is the principle of obedience,

[1] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

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but the principle of love is love. And of this the Apostle speaks,—the love which descends from Him to us. Let us begin at this source of all.

God is love, and love is the law of His kingdom. There is a hierarchy of love, having its beginning in the Eternal Three, descending from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to all orders of created spirits, angelic and ministering, and to all creatures in earth and heaven, binding all in one. Love is the stooping of the higher to the lower, the Creator to the creature, the parent to the child, the stronger to the weaker, the sinless to the sinful,—God stooping down to man. The penetrating, exalting consciousness that we are objects of the love of God, which has its fountains in eternity, has alone made apostles, martyrs, saints, and penitents. And this consciousness is awakened in us by a sense of the love of Christ. The love that constrains us is the love of God manifest in the flesh,—of the Eternal Word incarnate. What was it but His everlasting love as God that constrained Him to make Himself of no reputation, and take upon Him our manhood? What but His love, perfect both in His Godhead and in His manhood, constrained Him to give Himself, as God and man, to suffer a life of sorrow and a death of agony? This free, spontaneous, ineffable thirst for our salvation was the power which drew Him

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from His throne to the cross. The zeal which devoured Him was the fire of His eternal love to sinners; and this love, intimately realised, felt, and, if I may so speak, tasted by a consciousness of His sympathy and friendship towards us, one by one, was the motive which constrained St. Paul to a life of martyrdom.

See next how this motive works in us: what is the effect of this love of Christ upon our life?

It "constrains;" that is, it lays a force upon us, as a strong hand draws us withersoever it will. There are in creation powers of attraction which control whole orders of nature; as the loadstone, which draws its subjects to itself, and the sun, to which all nature answers. These are the constraining forces of the natural world—a parable of the attractions of the spirit. We know this by familiar experience in our lower life. What awakens love like love? What constrains us to the presence of another but a consciousness of his love to us? What draws us from among a multitude, and binds us to one among all others, but the wakened sense of his affection? We know how the eye has power to attract. Countenance and tone of voice are in themselves nothing, except as they are channels of this attractive force. So is it with the love of Christ. It is the most powerful constraint, draw-

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ing our whole spiritual nature to itself. We all know how a sense of the Divine Presence works upon us; it awes, chastens, and supports us: but the consciousness of the love of Christ is something more than a sense of His presence. It adds this further perception, that He is watching us in love; that He is inviting our love to Himself; that He is ordering all our outward state for our perfect sanctification, and all our inward life for the perception of His personal love. And the sense of His love is the mightiest of all constraining motives. It embraces our whole spiritual nature, touches it in all its springs, moves it in all its affections, stirs it in all its energies. It is the one only universal motive. Hope will make men strive, and fear will make men tremble; but love alone will waken love. The bliss of heaven will kindle our desire, the anguish of hell will make us thrill with alarm; but the love of Christ alone will soften, humble, and subdue. It has a response in the whole sphere of our spiritual life, in all its higher and lower affections. It kindles love, and love kindles all beside. And as it is universal in its effect, so it is uniform in its working. Other motives rise and fall in their power to constrain; they depend much on outward circumstances; they come and go; they are fainter or stronger, as if fitful and capricious. Who does not know the truth of this?

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Who does not know how hope and fear, shame and sorrow, joy and thankfulness, devotion and resolution, intentions and perseverance, vary with our actual state; sometimes, when specially awakened, making deep impression, sometimes almost vanishing away? But love never faileth.

And still more, a consciousness of the love of Christ is, of all, the most uniform and changeless principle of life. As, in our lower friendships, the consciousness of being loved stays by us at all times, through long years, under all trials, even without sensible memorials or renewed expressions to assure us; it embraces, moulds, determines our whole heart, and constrains us to the person who loves us, making his will our will, his wish our law: so with the love of Christ. There are spiritual miracles which it alone can work. The soul in man was so created, that no other power could satisfy or sway it altogether; no other can touch its life to the very quick, and awaken all its affections. The love of Christ felt in the heart is the only principle of perfect conversion to God. It is very easy to be almost a Christian; to be religious in habits and forms, in sensations and emotions, in intellect and intention; to be half, or almost altogether converted. And it is still easier there to linger, deceiving our own hearts.

When I speak of conversion, I mean, not only

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the change which comes in after-life upon the sinful and the careless, when they begin to turn with tardy steps towards God; but also the whole life-long penetrating change of heart which must pass on every regenerate soul. Every fallen spirit needs a conversion to God; for flesh and blood cannot inherit His kingdom. And whether that change or conversion be in after-life, begun too late, and with greater obstructions, or whether it begin with our earliest consciousness, as dawn lightens into noon, it is all one. Sudden or gradual are but properties of time, and time is nothing. The change of the soul from sin to God is an universal law; and every baptised soul needs a perfect conversion to God. Now, the only true motive of this change is a sense of the love of Christ.

We see its power even from the very font. What is it that draws the hearts of children to the service of Christ? Not the great white throne; not the face before which heaven and earth shall flee away; but the love of Jesus Christ revealed in His words and deeds, and believed by them as the atmosphere in which they live. This is about them everywhere, drawing them with a calm, even, steadfast motion to Himself. From earliest childhood sin is hateful to them, because it is hateful to Him; holiness lovely, because Christ loves it. To do or to leave any thing undone, it is enough for

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them to know that so He wills. Above the love of brother, sister, or mother, is the love of Him of whom the Gospels speak, suffering and dying for love of them. There is not upon earth a purer or heavenlier sight than a child listening to the life and words, the passion and love of Jesus Christ. The life of such is a perpetual conversion, a daily, hourly turning of the whole heart to Him. The mind of the flesh dies down in them, as the mind of the spirit enlarges its power and fulness, and the darkened face of the soul is converted more and more towards Him, until it is filled with His brightness, as the moon at the full.

And this we see also in after-life. What so binds to the cross the heart of those who are entering upon the perils of life as the consciousness of the love which from the cross descends upon them? The love of Christ is the purity and safety of youth. It is their shield in temptation, their strength in obedience, their spur in lingering, their measure in devotion and service. With what resolved and confiding hearts do such renew the vows of their baptism in confirmation; with how firm a will do they answer in the words "I do!" With what ardent and intent devotion do they come to their first communion; and with what ever-increasing desire do they await every return of the holy Sacrament.

All these are true and perfect examples of con-

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version. Indeed, the life-long conversion of the regenerate is the best and most perfect form of this great spiritual law. Late conversions are imperfect imitations, as "the shooting up of the latter growth;" "the latter growth after the king's mowings:"[1] for the bloom and the freshness are His. Nature has its tardy and scantier compensations, its after-fruits, and gleanings when the harvest is done. Such are most conversions of which the world takes note, because contrasts are objects of sense, while changes are objects of faith alone.

But let us take examples of such later and commoner conversions. What is it but the power of this constraining love which bends the will of those who, after baptism, fall, and yet repent? What is it that most deeply moves and changes the sinful, worldly, and wasted heart? What turned Saul from his career of blood, recalled Peter from his denials, drew sinners to wash His feet with tears? The tenderness, the look, the voice of love. The shame, sorrow, indignation, revenge of penitents spring from the too late awakened consciousness of the love against which they have been sinning. The greater the love, the greater their offending: the more deeply it is perceived, the more fervent their repentance.

But there is another effect of this love when it

[1] Amos vii. 1.

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is felt in the heart. It is the only source of unreserved devotion, and of perfect sacrifice of self. Many other motives draw us to partial obedience and to lesser self-denials. I need not speak of false and spurious motives, such as fanaticism, vain-glory, self-exaltation, which will lead men into great undertakings or perils under the plea of religion; much less need I speak of baser and earthlier motives. There is always a glare, a heat, and a noise about such characters, a restless, eager sharpness in their tone and way, which betrays the source of the fire from which they are kindled to be not in heaven but earth. We are now speaking of such motives as act upon sincere and religious hearts. In such persons we often see, with much of seriousness, goodness, and high aspiration, something which always keeps them down. They are at peace with the world, are esteemed by the majority, trusted by those who will not trust each other. They are esteemed prudent, discreet, and safe. Their life ruffles no one; is in keeping with the ways, hours, comfort, ease, enjoyment of society. And yet they are often charitable, earnest, and on the right side. But there is one visible defect. They want range, force, freedom, and a fearless spirit. In religious duties they take counsel of men less religious than themselves. They use the weights and measures of civilisation, of refinement,

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and of what the world calls possible. The one thing they lack is boldness to be "fools for Christ's sake." Such was not the spirit of those who in all ages have done or suffered great things for the kingdom of God. They knew no motive but the love of Christ. All other motives ran up into this, and were lost, as lesser forces are united in a greater. With what unreserved and generous affections did they give themselves to His service. It was not a cold conviction of truth, or a mere sentiment of its beauty, or a rule of conscience, or the encouragement of human esteem, or a passing fervour, or a fear of pains beyond the grave, or even a hope of eternal peace; none of these sufficed to set on fire those who have converted nations, planted churches, founded religious orders, kindled and moulded a spiritual lineage to tend the sick, instruct the ignorant, educate little children, reclaim sinners, redeem captives, pluck brands from the burning. For this there was needed a higher, deeper, mightier impulse, in which all hopes and fears are extinguished; a motive which breaks down the measures of self and of the world on every side, and can be meted only by a measure which is divine. The love of Christ constrained them. His love to them was the measure of their self-sacrifice for Him. Therefore they gladly forsook friends, home, and

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all things, that they might find Him enough alone. They had received the fire which falls from heaven, and, as it kindled, their hearts pleaded with them in secret and piercing words, "He wholly gave Himself for me; shall I give less to Him? I am altogether His in body, soul, and spirit. Shall I keep back what is His own? Shall I profess to serve Him with all I am, and keep back a part of the price, my heart being privy to it? My fearful, shrinking, delicate, ungenerous spirit makes me draw back from loneliness, danger, hardship, and peril of death. Yet I desire to live for Him, and to die for Him. If He would but give me the grace and the will to die to myself, and fear nothing; the love to kindle my whole soul for Him, as He was consumed by love for me; even I should dare to say, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'"[1]

But there is still one more effect of this divine motive. It is the only principle of an enduring perseverance. We know how any personal affection grows upon us, and becomes a part of our very life. All our consciousness is so pervaded by it, that we cannot distinguish it from a direct instinct of the soul. It grows stronger as it acts: by acting it is made perfect. Long trials of Christ's love in joy and sorrow, in storm and sun-

[1] Phil. i. 21.

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shine, reveal its divine tenderness and depth. And this quickens the activity of our own hearts with a living, thirsting desire to love Him with a greater love again. All the powers of our spiritual life are drawn to this point. They meet as in a focus, and kindle each other by uniting. Steadfast love is perseverance; it supports through all weariness and disappointment, all allurement and alarm. A true love to Christ moves in its path year by year, from strength to strength, without haste but without tarrying, calm, bright, and onward as the light of heaven. Take any example you will. Out of this one motive arise all motives. See what solace it has for every trial. Sometimes it brings persevering obedience, sometimes persevering patience. In a burdened life of worldly cares, what support it is to know, "This is His appointment; He gives it me because He loves me. Shall I not bear this for Him who bore all for me?" Or if it be weariness in the religious life, as of communicants who at the altar find no sweetness, only emptiness and reluctance, let them say, "How long did He love me much, and I loved Him little! How long did He wait for my love, and I would not! Now I must wait for Him; justly chastened by His love; slighted but not estranged." Take, again, those on whom the cloud of sorrow has fallen. Their happiness was stately

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and full, spreading abroad as the cedar. In one hour it withered away. Why? He loved you too well to lose you. In His love He smote you. He breathed upon your aspiring happiness, and it dried up from the very root. He cleared all away between Himself and you, that you might be conscious of His personal love, and choose it as your portion for ever.

Or perhaps you have been reaching out for a happiness you have never attained: the hope of your heart was dashed upon the threshold. When it seemed all your own, a sudden change came, and it was not. And why? Because the love of Christ had some better thing in store for you. Can you not trust Him? Is He not wise as loving? Are not your treasures in His hand? Do you love them as He loves? Are they not safer with Him than with you?

Or it may be that you have to bear long lingering sickness, with memories of sorrow and pain. The cross lay early upon you, and has never departed from your soul. Be sure that the love of Christ has in store for you some greater things hereafter. It may be the right hand or the left in His kingdom. God knoweth; but if so, the cup and the baptism must come first. And the cup which His love hath given you, shall you not drink it?

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And as in patience, so in hard and enduring service. What but the consciousness of this love could uphold a pastor's heart, wearied out by contradictions, wasted away with toiling for "souls that will not be redeemed?" It is His work, and that is enough. He will not disown it. Though men believe not, He abideth faithful. Let me labour alone and without fruit unto the last, so He love me still. Let me please Him and faint not; let me offend all the world, so I be accepted as His servant.

Above all, what other spring, and what other stay of perseverance is there to His hardier and bolder servants, who, choosing for their portion the full burden of His cross, go out into far lands, without father, without mother, without home or kindred, alone with Him Who is their love, to gather souls into His kingdom? What is there to sustain the craving and weakness of humanity, in the weariness of solitude, and under the burden of their own isolated hearts? There is but the love of Christ beneath them and around. The outer hardships of sky and shore, rude natures and savage wills, are nothing to the lonely world within. But their Master's love is enough. They know by intuitions of the heart, and by perceptions of their whole inward life, that He loves them, and gave Himself for them. They

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have but faintly done the like: for love they have given themselves in behalf of His elect. He loves them, and they love Him again. Who shall unloose this knot? Who shall unravel the strength of this heavenly bond? Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? When memories of home, fond faces, beloved images, rise thick and crowd upon them; when what they have lost seems a paradise, and their present life a desolation; when the human heart, for a passing moment, is too strong, and love and sorrow turn towards earth again; when failures, miscalculations, hasty steps, hopeless efforts, unforeseen reverses, beginnings abandoned, and aims missed at the very stroke, come back upon them, then it may be they grow weak, and ask, "Have I not acted in a false excitement, and bound myself to one life-long mistake? When I was in my own land, was it not well with me? Might I not have served Him truly, as others before and now, in the midst of peace and home, doing good work among my own people and by my father's house? Why have I come hither, exiled and cut off, bound by an irrevocable word?"

Because the love of Christ constrained them, therefore they are alone with Him in the wilderness. They have chosen well, and nobly followed out their choice. They shall never fail, nor be for-

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saken; never faint, nor weary. Though for a moment flesh and blood may make its pleading heard, yet the consciousness of their Master's love shall arise again to put all questioning down. It shall bear them unto the end. As the ark went upon the face of the waters, so shall they be upheld by the everlasting love, sustaining and wafting them to the eternal shore.

Such are the powers of this constraining love. It is the motive and solace of every faithful soul—the mightiest, purest, most inflexible law of a devout and persevering faith.

Do we so find it working in us? If not, why not? Because, before it can thus work in us conversion, devotion, or perseverance, we must feel this love, and, if I may so say, taste it by the spiritual perception of our hearts.

Perhaps we are conscious, as the chief fact of our spiritual life, that we have no such perception. We can, indeed, feel the love of kindred and of friends. This wakens and stirs us to live for them and in them. But His love falls coldly and without power upon us. We know it as a theory of faith, but we have no sense of it in our heart. Why is this? Why is it that some walk in the noonday sun, but are never kindled by its warmth? The coldness is in themselves: they carry it in their life-blood. So it is with the soul. There

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is some inward resistance, some palsying chill, some failure of vital power; something which deadens their sense and clouds their perception. Though the love of Christ has encompassed them from childhood, they have been unmoved and senseless.

Now, there are two things which chiefly hinder our perception of the love of Christ. The one is sin, wilfully committed; the other is a spirit at variance with His, consciously indulged. If, then, you are conscious of insensibility, examine yourself for the cause.

1. First ask yourself this question: Am I wilfully indulging in my conscience any sin which He hates? So long as we wilfully harbour any conscious evil, we must be cold and dead towards Him. I am speaking, not of the guilt of sin, but of its effect upon our inward state. Every grosser sin, as sensuality, excess in meat or drink, deadens the soul, and makes it as the body, drowsy and heavy. It becomes unfit for the perception of the love of Christ. So also all spiritual sins, such as anger, envy, pride, a double mind, and an evil tongue; or again, sloth, which is a sin both of the body and of the spirit, full of baseness and dishonour to our Lord and to ourselves. And besides these, there is one sin very common to Christians, and most provoking in His sight—the sin of inconstancy, the irresolute wavering between

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hot and cold, the lukewarm indifference which turns away from a religious life after a beginning has been made, as if all were known and despised as tasteless, sapless, and unpalatable.

These sins deaden the heart, and raise grave doubts within, whether it be possible that He can love such as we are. And doubts bring on fears, and fears estrangements. We shrink with a consciousness that we are unworthy of His love; and that shrinking estranges us the more, and hinders the first emotions of love to Him. Can you detect any such in yourselves, be it only in thought, memory, imagination? for spiritual sins deaden spiritual perceptions. Our hearts must first be cleansed, and their senses made quick and apprehensive. How can love constrain us, so long as we do not feel it? and how can we feel it, so long as our hearts are dead? But perhaps you will say, I am not conscious of indulging any sin which He hates, even in thought.

2. Then there is another question we must ask: Am I striving to be all that He loves? How long we are in learning that holiness is not a negative but a positive endowment. It does not consist only in not sinning, but in actual sanctity. We may be clear from gross sin, and yet have no love for Him. We may not be living for this world, and yet not be living for the next. Our mind may

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not be "earthly, sensual, devilish," and yet have no likeness to the mind of Christ. There is a worldliness which is pure, a hardness of heart which is refined, and a selfishness which is decent and dissembled. These never offend by gross or startling sins, but they are far from the fellowship of Christ and of God. How can hearts stunned by the world, or doating upon its material goods, perceive the love of Christ? Their faculties, their very organisation, are too gross and earthly. When, then, St. Paul speaks of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord," he means a positive endowment of the soul. Just as the intellect is developed and trained by the discipline of science, so as to awaken new faculties, powers, and perceptions, and to bring a new range of objects within its sphere of intelligence and of fruition, so is it with holiness, without which no man shall see God. Sanctity is a state and discipline of the soul, awakened, unfolded, and empowered by the Spirit of God, to know, love, and delight in Him. It implants spiritual faculties, senses, affections; it creates a spiritual consciousness, whereby we dwell in God, and God in us. This is the wedding-garment, for lack of which the guest at the marriage-supper was cast out; "the white raiment," clean and white, "the righteousness of Saints;" "the mind of Christ;" the heavenly endowment of which the Apostle

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speaks when he says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a positive spiritual state, to be attained only by God's gift through prayer, and a will united to His will. Where this union exists, the grace of the Spirit of God and the perfections of the mind of Christ descend into the heart. From this source alone we receive gentleness, lowliness, purity, self-denial, self-forgetfulness, and all the heavenly beatitudes. And as we are made like to Him, we are drawn to Him, and by nearness perceive His love to us, and learn to delight in Him, dwelling in the consciousness of His love. Have you attained this state? Are you striving for it?

But you will perhaps say, All this I have striven to do, and yet I feel cold and insensible. I have known the love of Christ from my childhood, but never felt it. It has been a conviction of my reason, but not a perception of my heart. Do what I will, I remain still unmoved and hard, as if there were no love descending with the fulness of God upon me.

3. There remains, then, one thing still to do. Pray Him to make you feel His love. St. Paul felt nothing till it fell from heaven upon him. We cannot awaken this sense in ourselves, any more than we can open eyes that are blind. "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and

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cometh down from the Father of lights." There is One alone who can make "the sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and send His rain upon the just and upon the unjust." Pray Him to lift up the light of His love upon you; to reveal to you the mystical cross, the book of His love which passeth knowledge, and to give you grace with all saints to read it in its length, breadth, depth, and height. It is by no mechanical work of ours that we can come to a perception of the Heart of Jesus Christ. He alone can open it to us, and open our heart to see its meaning.

Let this, then, be your prayer, for prayer is the uniting of our consciousness with His Presence. Let it also be your meditation, for meditation is the gazing of the spiritual eye upon His love revealed in Himself. Let this be your desire in holy communion, for what is it but the union of His Spirit with our spirit, His heart with our heart, His love with our love? In the sacrament of His Body and Blood His divine love kindles our faint affections; and through the mystery of His incarnation and His crucifixion, by the wounds in His "hands and His side," He reveals His miraculous compassion. Let our prayer be, "Thou knowest that I love Thee;" yet not so that I dare say it of myself. Forgive my lack of love. I would love Thee, if I could, above kindred, friends, home, and

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life itself. I would fain love Thee so as to desire to depart and be with Thee; so as that life may be to me sweet only for Thee, and death without fear, because it shall bring me to Thee.

Let this be your aspiration at the altar, year by year, day by day, again and again, always persevering, in every prayer, in every communion. Hold Him fast by your supplications, and let Him not go till He bless you with this consciousness of love.

What drew Him down to us but love? what but love can lift us up to Him? What but the love of Christ dwelling in His elect is the life of His Church on earth; the rest of His Saints unseen? With St. Peter, they follow Him in faith; with the beloved disciple, they lie upon His bosom and are blest.

What a gathering shall that be when He shall have fulfilled His promise, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me;" when, by the bands of love and the attractions of His pity and of His passion, He shall have drawn all His elect from all ages and from all lands, from all kindreds and from all homes, from all sins and from all crosses, from all toils and solitude, from all partings and exile, from tears and waiting, from doubts and fears, strivings and failings, strivings and masteries, to the foot of the Eternal Throne! What a meeting,

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when we shall see Him who hath so loved us eternally; when all Saints, from the first unto the last, from the least unto the greatest,—all whom He hath loved unto the end, shall stand before Him for Whose love's sake they have lived and died, each one in perfect personal identity, in perfect mutual recognition,—changed, and yet the same; the same in all that we have loved, but changed into more of love and bliss than we have ever desired or dreamed—there to serve Him for ever before the throne of God our Father!

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SERMON II.

THE SONS OF GOD.

ROM. viii. 14.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

ST. PAUL here shews us what is the end and law of our regeneration. The Son of God was made man, that we might be made the sons of God. The Holy Ghost came down to continue in us this work of our redemption. We were made sons of God by regeneration in the baptism of water and of the Holy Ghost. Our adoption was a free, unsought, undeserved, and sovereign act of God, for His only Son's sake. Creation was not more sovereign, nor was the dust of the ground more passive when the first man was made in God's likeness, than we, when, through baptism, we were born again as sons of God.

But St. Paul is here speaking, not of our adoption as it is an act on God's part, but of our son-

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ship as it is a spiritual reality and actual attainment on our part.

We were *made* sons by baptism: we *become* sons by obedience. How can we become sons, if we were already made so? As we were *made* man by our natural birth, whereby we obtained the nature and capacities of manhood, we *become* men by natural growth, whereby what is in germ and virtue becomes actual and perfect.

It is in this sense that St. John says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[1] Baptism is our adoption, as birth is our life. As life is natural birth produced, so sonship is the spirit of adoption produced. To be led by spiritual instincts, lights, and inspirations, is to *become*, and therefore in a very and eternal reality to be, sons of God.

But St. Paul does not mean, that none but they who are led by the Spirit are sons. The very word *led* implies obedience to the Spirit of adoption. For many are regenerate who will not obey. All who are baptised are drawn; but they only are here said to be "led" who follow the leading of the Spirit. When St. Paul says, "All are

[1] St. John i. 12, 13.

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not Israel who are of Israel,"[1] he does not mean that faithless Israelites are not of the lineage of Israel. Nor, when our Lord called Nathanael "an Israelite indeed,"[2] did He mean that they who were not true to their name were not indeed of God's chosen nation. So in this place, as many as follow where the Spirit leads, they are sons of God indeed.

This, then, is our calling, and this is the test of our adoption.

How many simply deride it. In this day of light, when we are told that manhood is divine, and that, when conscious of his divinity, man is what the tempter promised, the grace of God in our adoption is looked down upon as a superstition of human childhood, a figment of the mind, or a remnant of mediæval credulity. How many disbelieve it because they cannot find it in their own consciousness, therefore cannot realise it; and what they cannot realise they deny. How many profess to believe, and yet choose their own path,—are their own leaders; consciously evading the leading of their baptism in all its higher and deeper paths, in all that cross their own inclinations. How many stifle and lower their spiritual life by empty, unworthy, frivolous trifling; by ease, luxury, sloth, softness, self-indulgence,

[1] Rom. ix. 6. [2] St. John i. 47.

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and acquiescence in relaxed maxims of the world. How few truly realise the spirit of their adoption, and become sons of God in life, energy, and act. How few, I mean, realise the personality and presence of the Holy Spirit. How few live in the consciousness that they are within the sphere of a Divine person, loving, compassionate, long-suffering, who, from their childhood, has been guiding and bearing with them.

Let us, then, try ourselves, and see how it is with us; whether or no we be sons of God in that one only sense which shall stand when all things shall be tried by fire. For in one sense sons of God we must be for ever. We can destroy ourselves, but we cannot efface our baptism; we may mar the image of God, but not our baptismal cross; we may forfeit the bliss of our adoption, but we cannot evade the doom of reprobate sons. This must be our chiefest bliss or our deepest anguish, and abide with us for ever. Let us, then, well try ourselves, lest we be deceived.

There are three certain marks by which we may ascertain our true sonship.

1. The first mark is a ready will. It may be asked, How does the Spirit of God lead us? In what way? Is it in any way distinguishable from the actings of our natural conscience; and if so, how may we distinguish it? How am I to know

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what is His leading? and what am I to do to follow it?

The natural conscience is indeed the throne of the Holy Spirit within us. It is the power in us over which He presides, and by which He guides us. There is by nature a light which separates between right and wrong, between truths and falsehoods; and to this natural light the Spirit of God adds yet greater light. There is a light infused by baptism which strengthens and extends the light of nature. New faculties are awakened in the soul, and new powers implanted. Faith is a new sense; and to this sense the realities of the world unseen are lifted up. New objects and laws are revealed by the illumination of truth; new affections and perceptions are elicited by the inspirations of grace. This is the passive state of the soul born again of the Spirit. But here the trial begins. It is by our *will* that we are to be proved and judged. In the midst of all this growing, overwhelming light, the will may remain stubborn and rebellious. Faults in childhood growing into the sins of boyhood, hardening into the entanglements and obstinacy of manhood, establish a deliberate resistance in the will against the light of the Spirit.

We often see the most promising forms of character slowly fading off. For a time there is a kind of negative declension. No marked and ac-

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tive faults appear; but nothing is advancing towards holiness and the mind of Christ. They seem for a while to stand still, as we see in an arrow's flight a momentary pause before it begins to descend. So they never go beyond a certain point; then for a while they hang in suspense—then slowly fall. Then some one sin appears, long nourished in secret, now at last revealed; some one parasite, which has clung about them, and slowly confirmed its grasp around the whole strength and stature of their character. And this one sin gives the fatal wound to their spiritual life. They deliberately choose this sin; and this choice in riper years overmasters the grace of their baptism. The responsible agent rejects God's free gift, received in unconsciousness at the font.

So even with refined faults, which equally produce an intense variance of the will, and even a more subtil spirit of hostility against God. Such, I mean, as pride, ambition, selfishness, fastidious refinement, supercilious confidence in self. All these estrange the will from God; and the will is the centre and quick of our probation.

For this estrangement of the will creates reluctance, struggling, opposition, and a slavish or rebellious heart. What more miserable state than to have our reason clearly convinced of the sovereignty of God's Spirit, and our will averted from

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Him? Such Christians are sons by God's grace; but slaves and rebels by their own deliberate choice.

This, then, is the first mark—a ready will to follow where the light of the Spirit leads. When we come to some hard choice between pleasure and duty, between a desire to venture and a motion to forbear, we come to our place and hour of trial. The motions in our conscience are admonitions from God; they are given to be obeyed.

It is dangerous to delay. When our Lord called one to follow Him, and he answered, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," what answer did he receive? "Let the dead bury their dead."[1] So with us; hesitation brings reasons for delay; and delay gives time for temptation: one hour's delay brings unknown hindrance. The motions of God's Spirit are like the flowing of the tide, which, taken at the full, will lift us over every bar: tarry and lose them, and we may be stranded for ever.

There is a golden chain, a thread frail and delicate, by which He leads us on.

In some it is drawing them to conversion. Their past life rises up into its true shape and colour, and they are moved to flee from it. They see its sin, or hollowness, or presumption. Then they are drawn onward to holier aspirations and deeper purposes. They desire to turn with their

[1] St. Matt. viii. 21, 22.

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whole heart to God, and to begin a life altogether new in aim, intention, and character. This is the leading of the Spirit, the crisis of their trial.

In some, again, who have passed beyond this point, it is drawing them to the grace of deeper penitence. This keener self-reproach and clearer insight into their own sinful consciousness are given them to break up the insensible and easy confidence with which some absolve themselves. But it is a gift that must be followed.

In some it is drawing them on from commandments to precepts, from precepts to counsels of perfection. The light which rises in the soul, if slighted, declines surely to its setting. If we will not go on to more devotion, self-denial, and love, we shall fall back into less. To some it is as much the crisis of their spiritual life to follow, one by one, into the narrower paths of toil, prayer, and the cross, as to others to leave the broad way that leadeth to destruction. "To him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away." If we hang back, the golden thread may snap asunder, and we fall back into any measure of declension.

Let us beware, then, how we tarry and debate. Lingering is a provocation of God's patience. He would be loved and honoured by a free and filial service. All depends on a will ready and prompt

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to obey. Who knows what, by a single act of the will, you may gain or lose? You are, it may be, at the cross roads, where the ways part asunder,—the one to life eternal, the other to eternal death. What you do will leave its character in the book of God's remembrance. As we choose, so we shall be. What we will we are. Our will is our whole being summed into one intense, deliberate act. Resist the Spirit of God, and you may be cast out of our Father's sight; follow, and you shall be His sons, by grace, for ever.

2. Another mark of a filial spirit is a loving heart.

All men are ruled by either love or fear: there is no intermediate state. "Perfect love casteth out fear," and a ruling fear casteth out love. They may be mingled for a while; but one or the other must bear rule and sway at last. And this is a sure criterion. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."[1] He would have from us the service of sons, loving, glad, and grateful, without stint or measure; not saying, How much *must* I do? but How much *may* I, how much *can* I do? How much time, substance, service, or thought can I give to Him?

There are no weights and measures among the

[1] Rom. viii. 15.

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vessels of the sanctuary. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He gave Himself wholly for us; what shall we not give to Him again? The service of our Father is perfect freedom; fearless, and yet fearing alway; fearing to offend; fearing to come short; fearing our own unworthiness; fearing to appear in His spotless Presence; but fearing nothing else. The true service of sons is pure love: not for safety, nor for reward; not to escape hell, nor to gain heaven; but to serve, please, and glorify our Lord, who loved us purely and without cause, except His own eternal love.

Now, what is your motive? Why do you live a Christian life? Why do you keep an outward habit of religion? Why do you pray? Why do you communicate? Is it from the conclusions of the intellect? because you are convinced of the duty, as with a mechanical certainty? Is it because such a life beseems the dignity of man, or the order of the world, or the well-being of families and the social state? Is it from passive and unquestioning dispositions,—a sort of dead bias, gained in childhood? Is it from the support of an outward system? the custom of others? the daily warnings of the bell? the altar inviting every week? Is it that good education has passed into the decorum of life and the channel of worldly hap-

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piness and worldly interest, and because, with no change of heart, your life has fallen into a vague and beaten track? Or is it from a conscious filial love to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ?

If not, what are all these motives? How will they endure the piercing of those eyes which are as a flame of fire?

What is God's kingdom but love? What but love is God's service? What are all things,—knowledge and spiritual science, prayers, fasts, alms, communions—without love in the heart? The soul that loves not is dead.

3. And to take one more: a third mark of a filial spirit is a peaceful conscience.

St. Paul says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Now in this we may deceive ourselves. Many are in peace who have built upon no true foundation. And some who might be at peace will not suffer themselves to rest. A peaceful conscience must be a clean conscience. The peace of an unsifted conscience is either self-deceit or insensibility. None are more at peace in this sense than they who have no consciousness of sin, no perception of God's presence, no shrinking from His spotless purity.

But this peace is not the witness of the Spirit with our spirit. It is the security of a torpid heart; the stupor of a silent conscience. Easy as

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it is for dark and impure hearts to deceive themselves in this deep scrutiny, to cleansed and single hearts all is plain and clear. Our own spirit, that is, our whole inward consciousness, bears witness by the instinct of its own sincerity, by the steadiness of its desires after God, and by its delight in loving and serving Him. Where these things are, there can be no self-deceit. Though conscious of manifold imperfections, of a multitude of temptations, of frequent faults, and of a sinfulness which still cleaves to the soul as mortality to the body, yet a sincere heart cannot long or greatly deceive itself. It is our ultimate rule, ordained by God Himself. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." And where there is this testimony in our own hearts, there will always be the witness also of the Spirit; not by visions or the voice of words, nor by peculiar revelations or unusual tokens; but by the calm and steady shining of His presence. To every cleansed conscience God gives a special clearness of spiritual sight. The objects of faith unveil themselves, as the face of the earth when the morning mists ascend. The visible world has a limited horizon, near and circumscribed; but the world unseen has no boundaries to the gaze of faith. The

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saints of all times and dispensations, the companies of just men made perfect, the heavenly court, the throne of God, the purpose, mind, and will of the divine kingdom, the reality of all laws and mysteries of grace, stand out ever more and more clearly and vividly before the pure in heart. And with clearer sight comes greater strength; and with greater strength a greater ease in the whole life of faith.

With this comes also a deeper sense of the presence of God; a sense which grows up into a consciousness finer than all thought, and independent of all reflection. It is as the consciousness of an eye ever upon us, — an eye of love, in which it is happiness to live; a countenance ever shining downwards; a light lifted up in token of goodwill; a reality out of ourselves and yet within us, or rather in which — as in the air or noonday light — we are enshrined, enfolded, and encompassed. This is the witness of the Spirit with our spirit; something too deep and intimate for words, too high and subtil for logical proof; but sure, real, and perceptible by faculties above reasoning or sense.

Have you, then, these three marks of the sons of God: a ready will, a loving heart, a peaceful conscience? If so, happy are ye. If not, what are you doing, hoping, expecting?

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Take, then, some rules by which to seek this true spirit of a son. There are two ways to it:

1. By learning obedience even in the least things.

There is nothing small which God has commanded: His greatness makes all about Him to be great. Nothing is little by which He may be greatly pleased, or greatly offended. A thought is a little thing, and yet it may be a great provocation of the divine Majesty; for every sin has the whole virus and principle of sin. So every duty, even the least duty, involves the whole principle of obedience. And little duties make the will *dutiful*, that is, supple and prompt to obey. Little obediences lead into great: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."

The daily round of duty is full of probation and of discipline: it trains the will, heart, and conscience. To be holy we need not to be prophets or apostles. The commonest life may be full of perfection. The duties of home are a discipline for the ministries of heaven. A faithful servant has the heart of a son of God. A dutiful child lives in the spirit of adoption. An obedient wife exercises the whole grace of submission. A faithful pastor may labour in the spirit of an apostle; and a soul in wrongs or sufferings may gain a

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martyr's crown. It is specially the common, unnoticed duties of life which are the safest and most searching tests. They have no ostentation or excitement, but are done from inward force, and a fruitful principle of duty.

2. The other way to a filial spirit is by habitual communion in the holy sacrament.

From the font we are invited to the altar. Once washed, we need to be perpetually fed with spiritual food. The life that was breathed into us from above cannot be sustained without the Bread of heaven.

What, then, is the state of those who never communicate? Sinful Christians slay their souls by wounds or poison: every sin that a man commits violates the gift of life. Slothful Christians starve their souls by wasting and exhaustion. Inconstant and irregular communicants undermine their spiritual steadfastness. Seldom communions make cold communions. Frequent communion is the best preparation for the altar; the communion of last Sunday for the next, of yesterday for to-day.

It is by habitual fellowship with the presence of our Lord that our will is united with His will, our heart with His heart, our conscience with His Spirit.

It is by this union that we attain the will to

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choose His will, the will to cross our own. A will turned against itself is a token of the presence of God. As, if water should climb upward to its springs, or fire turn its points of flame downward to the earth, we should see and know that One greater than nature is here; so, when we choose pain and reject pleasure, when we will not what we will, but are willing for that against which our will is naturally bent, we may adore the presence of Him Whose Will gives law to all. Seek Him, then, continually in the even obedience of home, and in His presence at the altar, and He shall lead you by the path of the sons of God to the peace of His kingdom.

Your way shall be sure; I do not say it shall be smooth. In bringing many sons to glory, He hath made the Leader of their salvation, the first who trod the path, "perfect through suffering."[1] He may ordain this also for you. We know not: God knoweth. But, smooth or rough, the way shall be sure; and He will lead you unto the end, through all changes of life, through all shadows of the world, through struggles and pain, hope and fear, sorrow and the cross, up the ascending path, by chastisements and warnings, by sudden visitations and lingering cares, by tokens in your home and at the altar, by persuasions more moving than

[1] Heb. ii. 10.

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words, by pledges more assuring than a miracle, until every son shall be conformed to the Son incarnate, eternal, "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature,"[1] in the kingdom of our Father.

[1] Col. i. 15.

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SERMON III.

THE NAME OF JESUS.

St. Matt. i. 21.

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus."

THESE words were spoken in vision by the angel of God to Joseph. They are a part of the divine message which revealed to him the mystery of the Incarnation. Strange things were in the thoughts of his heart, but stranger still were those made known from heaven. He was himself included in the great ministry of divine power and love. Second only to Mary, who was chosen to be the Mother of our Lord, is he who was elected to be her betrothed husband, and the foster-father of the Son of God. "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." What a charge was here committed to him—to watch over the Mother and the Son; to be the guardian of

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the Word made flesh. Unto which of the angels gave He at any time so great a trust? They ministered to Him; but Joseph was invested with a father's sway; he fostered Him in His childhood; wrought for Him, nurtured Him, bare Him as a protector and a guide.

And when the angel had given this great commission, he revealed also the Name of the divine Child. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." The Name had been chosen in heaven. It was already known in the heavenly court. Angels worshipped it when they adored the Eternal Son Incarnate from the foundation of the world.

Why, it may be asked, was so great care taken to choose and to reveal a name? Because names are realities — what they express is no mere sound, but a living truth. The Father is the Father, not because He is called so, but He is called so because He is the Father. The Son is the Son, not because He is called the Son, but He is called so because He is the Son. Names stand for persons; and persons are living and true realities. This we know even in earthly names; they represent to us persons, with all their complex associations of character and feature. As persons kindle our affections, and waken our sympathies, so names take up the sympathies and affections which cling to persons. When present, persons are the objects

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of our hearts; when absent, names come into their place. And names call up the liveliest and fondest memories. When we hear them, we see before us forms and countenances, with their expression and character; we hear the tones and accents, the laugh and footstep of the past. Names are to us what persons are, dear or indifferent, moving or powerless, just as they for whom they stand. Who does not know what is the power of the name of father or mother, sister or brother? What visions they bring back upon us: what a stream of memories; of years long passed away, of careless childhood, bright mornings, lingering twilights, the early dawn, the evening star, and all the long-vanished world of happy, unanxious thoughts, with the loves, hopes, smiles, and tenderness of days gone by. Who does not know what visions of maturer life come and go with the sound of a name, of one familiar word—the symbol of a whole order now no more? The greater part of our consciousness is summed up in memory; the present is but a moment, ever flowing, past almost as soon as come. Our life is either behind us or before; the future in hope and expectation, the past in trial and remembrance. Our life to come is little realised as yet; we have some dim outlines of things unseen, forecastings of realities behind the veil, and objects of faith beyond the grave; but

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all this is too divine and high. We can hardly conceive it; at best faintly, often not at all. Our chief consciousness of life is in the past, which yet hangs about us as an atmosphere peopled with memories and forms. They live for us now in names, beloved and blessed.

So is it with this Name chosen of God. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." It stands to us as the witness of peace and bliss. What visions are called up by it! The Child at Nazareth, or sitting in the temple; the Healer of sorrows at the gate of Nain, or weeping by the grave in Bethany; the Cleanser of sin; the Lord of compassion, breaking bread in the wilderness; the good Shepherd; the Friend of Sinners; the Absolver of penitents; the Companion of the lonely, as they walk by the way of life and are sad; and now, in the heavenly kingdom, the Redeemer, pitiful, loving, compassionate; stooping over us, with a countenance of light, meek and patient, divine in tenderness, our Lord and our God. All this rises up at the sound of this sacred Name. Let us see why it reveals all this to our faith.

1. First, because the name Jesus is the name Saviour. When Isaiah, in the spirit of prophecy, spake of Him, he gave His heavenly titles, His divine name. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The ever-

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lasting Father, The Prince of Peace."[1] But the angel brought to us His earthly title, the human name which He should take as the Son of man. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." And then he reveals the reason: "For He shall save His people from their sins."

It expresses His office as our Saviour. He is our salvation. The whole mystery of His person and of His work is revealed in the name Jesus; for He first saved our nature by taking it upon Himself. He took to Himself our manhood of the substance of our fallen humanity, and made it sinless and deathless. In our nature, though without sin, He suffered death, that He might save us from sin and death. Therefore He is the Saviour both of our nature and of ourselves. And His name is a healing name, pledging to us the salvation He has made perfect in His own immortal flesh. We may draw from this word the whole baptismal faith. It brings before us the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the divine image in which we were created; the abyss into which we fell and died. It reveals to us the mystery of the eternal Son made Man, suffering and dying for us, His life of contradiction, His death of agony. "He is our peace."[2] And His name reveals to us the reconciliation of God and

[1] Isaiah ix. 6. [2] Ephes. ii. 14.

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man, of things in heaven and things in earth; the justification of the faithful, the absolution of sinners, the calm of the dying, the rest of saints. What a title is Saviour! dear to each one, as he knows the depth of his own fall. If we realise what sin is, and death: the eternal weight of guilt, the anguish of defiled hearts, the torment of temptation, the judgment to come, the undying worm, the everlasting flame, the loss of God; if we know, each one, what our life has been in childhood, youth, and manhood,—its sins and sorrows, its wounds and sicknesses, its inward darkness and deceit:—and unless we know these things, we do but take this Name in vain:—if, indeed, we know all this with a living and thrilling heart, then there is no "name under heaven given among men"[1] so full of calm and healing. It will be to us exactly what we are in ourselves: to the impenitent an empty word, to the penitent life and pardon: to any measure of penitence, dear as the sorrow is deeper; dearest to those who are self-accused and convicted, guilty in their own eyes above all, sorrowing and alone, not for want of kind hearts around them, but because the kindest and nearest heart is all too far away to soothe the affliction of a contrite spirit. One alone can enter into the quick of our grief. One alone can heal

[1] Acts iv. 12.

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a wounded heart. One only Name has power to save.

2. But there is a deeper meaning still. The name Jesus is His name as our kinsman. It is His name as man—the name of His humiliation, given on the eighth day, when, for our sakes, He humbled Himself. He is very Man, in all the truth of our humanity. He took our true manhood—not of a like substance with us, but of the same; the one substance of mankind. By regeneration, we are "of His flesh and of His bone," who by incarnation is of ours. He entered into human relations. He shared our kindred, and placed Himself in the order of our consanguinity. The Spirit of prophecy, speaking in the person of the Church, cried of old, "Oh, that Thou wert as my brother."[1] And this desire He has granted. He is made our brother: "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father."[2] He has, therefore, taken upon Him all the affections of kindred. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."[3] As He is the faultless and perfect Son, so He is the loving and perfect Brother. As human nature has its perfection in

[1] Cantic. viii. 1.

[2] St. John xx. 17.

[3] St. Matt. xxv. 40.

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His person, so human kindred has its perfection in His heart. His love, tenderness, and sympathy as a Brother, are as perfect as His patience, lowliness, and sanctity as Man. The name Jesus is the name of a brother in blood, who thereby binds Himself to us with the natural bonds which unite us to each other. It pledges to us His sympathy in all sorrows of body and of soul,—in poverty and straits, in weariness and fasting, in fear and anxiety, in temptation and desertion: all these He shares with us, by the perfect sympathy and perfect affection of a brother. Let us dwell upon this thought, as it is revealed to us in the mystery of the Incarnation.

There are two spheres of being; the uncreated, where from everlasting the eternal Son dwelt with the Father and the Holy Ghost; and the created, into which, by His incarnation, He came down to dwell with us. In the higher sphere, He still received the adoration of the heavenly court as God, while, in the lower, angels ministered to Him as man. And now, exalted in our manhood to His Father's throne, the Lord Jesus, very Man as very God, receives the homage of all worlds, while, as our brother, He is united still with us. Here is the line at which the faith of many fails. They believe His Godhead, and profess to believe His manhood; but they shrink from the divine mys-

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teries of our living incorporation with His perfect humanity, our very and true participation in His divine nature. Therefore, to them, sacraments are figures of an intellectual food; the Church an union springing from our individual will; the sympathy of Christ a fancy, or even an irreverent approach. And for the same cause they cannot understand the blessed reality of His human affections, of His heart as man. They shrink from it, as something presumptuous, or enthusiastic; or as lowering, and, as they say, humanising the spiritual and divine. What, then, would they have said of the Incarnation itself, if they had not unconsciously received it before they began to judge as a condition to believing? The mystery of the Incarnation is, indeed, a humanising of God, as it is also a deifying of man; for in Him the Godhead and the manhood are alike perfect and indivisible. The name Jesus speaks to us through His human heart, like ours in all things, sin only excepted.

3. But there is, if possible, a still deeper and more precious meaning of this name. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."[1] When He was on earth, He had, if I may speak after our common way, His particular friendships. Beside the kindred of blood which He contracted

[1] Prov. xviii. 24.

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with all, there is a spiritual kindred, which is even nearer still. "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of My Father in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him."[1] He has told us on what this special love is founded. It rested on the zeal of Peter, the ardent love of John, the diligent service of Martha, the yearning devotion of Mary; and yet their love was but the reflection of the love He first bare to them—the faint return of that love wherewith He had loved them eternally. Nevertheless, we here may learn a great law of His kingdom, that He has particular friendships, and a special love for those who love and live for Him. To them this Name is a depth of sweetness, as the harmonies of a perfect strain. It is "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." It sheds abroad in them a consciousness of heavenly love. It has been to them as a hymn of praise, a prayer of power, a litany of pleading, a meditation all the day long. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." This has been the musing of saints. Their words and their writings, their acts and their prayers, their public labours and their solitary hours, their

[1] St. Matt. xii. 48; St. John xiv. 23.

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lives and their deaths, have been full of it. Preachers have taken it as their text. The name of Jesus, said one of old, "is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, gladness in the heart, medicine to the soul. Is any of you sad, let Jesus come into his heart, and thence pass into his lips. No sooner is the light of this name arisen, than all clouds fly before it, and the calm sky returns." "When I speak the name 'Jesus,' I set before me a man meek and lowly of heart, benign and modest, pure and pitiful, bright with all goodness and holiness; and He is, moreover, God the Almighty, Who heals me by His example, and strengthens me by His help."[1] The Church has made hymns of this one sacred word. "Jesu, sweet in memory, Giver of joy to the heart; sweet above the honeycomb, sweeter than all, is Thy Presence. No song so soft, no tidings so glad, no thought so grateful, as Jesus the Son of God. Jesu, Hope of penitents, how gentle to those who plead with Thee! how good to those who seek! But what to those who find Thee?"

What, if we dare to speak of it, was the name of such a Son to His blessed Mother; what a name of love ineffable, of adoring fond delight! What was the memory of that name, in after years, to her whom He had forgiven sevenfold; what in long

[1] S. Bernard, in Cant. Serm. xv.

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years of loneliness to St. John; what to St. Peter in the sharpness of the cross? What has it been, what is it not, to all solitary and saintly hearts, for whom this world has no solace, this life nothing that they should any more desire it?

And what is this name to us? When we hear it, what does it awaken? When we read it, what does it kindle in our hearts? Does it call up a vision of beauty and of majesty; a Presence awful with divine glory, radiant with a countenance of love? Does it make our hearts to burn with a memory of His meekness and tenderness, His afflictions and His passion? Does it thrill through them with a consciousness that for us He was all this, and He suffered all this, and that He is all this to us still?

No other word can declare at once, what we have been to Him, and what He has been to us.

We have been to Him all that sinners can: we dethroned Him from our hearts, and from the kingdom of His Father; we girded Him with our fallen manhood; we laid on Him the necessity of sorrow; we bound Him by the law of death; we pierced Him upon the cross; we have been to Him as the ungrateful lepers, cleansed and thankless; we have slighted and forgotten Him all the day long. "Out of sight, out of mind." We have lived as if He had never suffered and died; as if

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He had never been, as if He were a fabulous person, an abstraction, a name standing for a theory or an intellectual scheme.

And what has He not been to us? From our childhood to this hour; in the days of our sinful blindness, and in the years of our more sinful contempt of light; in our sinning and repenting, our returning and relapsing; all the while He has been to us forgiving, patient, tender, full of pity, full of peace, our Saviour, kinsman, and friend. He loved us even in our falls, and accepts our love even after so great ingratitude. Let each one look into himself. What has He been to you in times of sickness, and what have you been to Him in your time of health? Has not His countenance shone upon you in the darkness of sorrow, bereavement, and solitude; and has not your face been turned away from Him when the light came back into your home again? Have you not learned by trial, and almost by sense, that all the visions and parables of mercy revealed in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus are perpetual miracles of grace, perpetual ministries of consolation? Does He not now as then—has He not always until now received sinners, bound up broken hearts, cleansed the contrite, consoled mourners, upheld the sinking, visited the path of the lonely, the hiding-place of sorrow, the pains of sickness, the pallet of the

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dying? Have you not so known Him nigh to you in your home and heart?

Let us, then, desire and pray that we may love His person. Let us not think, or fancy, or dream about loving Him, but love Him "in deed and in truth." To love Him is not an act of the intellect, but an affection of the heart. It is to be attained, not by a vivid imagination, but by a fervent will. If we would love Him, we must ask of Him to make us feel His love. It is love that awakens love. In the measure in which we feel the glow and sunshine of His love resting upon us, we shall kindle and break forth into love to Him again. As we learn to know our guilt and sinfulness, our sloth and perversity, our churlish and ungrateful hearts; as we come to see the coldness, weariness, estrangement of our souls, even in our prayers before Him, nay, above all, at the very altar; and, feeling all this, as we taste His forgiveness and compassion, His tenderness and pity, then we shall know the sweetness of this sacred Name. It will be to us the pledge of all He is. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth;" all the day long we shall remember it: abroad and at home it will be with us, and "the whole house shall be filled with the odour of the ointment."

For this let us strive always to realise His

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Presence. O slow of heart; we speak of Him as of one come and gone, as of a wayfarer who once tarried for a night, long ago past in the dimness of history; or we think of Him as of one whom we shall some day see, with whom we shall then begin to make account. How few live upon His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway;" and the blessedness of the relation, that He is our Master, and we His servants; He our Lord, and we His disciples. "They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him." What love and sorrow is in that one word, "my Lord!" Is He not so to each of us? May not each one of us say, "My Lord and my God?" What a strength and spring of life, what hope and trust, what glad, unresting energy, is in this one thought,—to serve Him who is "my Lord" ever near me, ever looking on; seeing my intentions before He beholds my failures; knowing my desires before He sees my faults; cheering me to endeavour greater things, and yet accepting the least; inviting my poor service, and yet, above all, content with my poorer love. Let us try to bear this in mind, whatsoever, wheresoever we be. The humblest and the simplest, the weakest and the most encumbered, may love Him not less than the busiest and strongest, the most gifted and laborious. If our heart be

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clear before Him; if He be to us our chief and sovereign choice, dear above all, and beyond all desired; then all else matters little. That which concerneth us He will perfect in stillness and in power, and His name will be our solace and strength, the beginning of every work, the end of every desire, our motive and our hope, our meditation and our confidence. The Name of Jesus will be our all: what it speaks, He is. It shall be perseverance in life, and peace in death; an absolving plea in the day of His coming, a song of joy in the kingdom of the Resurrection. It is even now the chant of saints, the hallelujah of angels; for God hath given Him "a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."[1]

[1] Phil. ii. 9-11.

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SERMON IV.

CHRIST PREACHED IN ANY WAY A CAUSE OF JOY.

PHIL. i. 18.

"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

THE great Head of the Church has two chief ways of spreading the knowledge of the faith —the preaching of His pastors, and the contradiction of the world. And this seems to be the plain meaning of St. Paul. Some preached Christ out of envy of the Apostles, and in strife against them; in "contention" and contradiction, or by pretended and rival commission from Christ Himself. These were gainsayers. Others preached "of good will" and in truth, as His true pastors and their brethren. Both were united in one work, that is, in making Christ's name rise more loudly above the din and turmoil of the world. The

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truth of the Gospel was heard in articulate and thrilling tones through all the noise and uproar of Rome. The enemies of the Gospel helped to fill the forum, the circus, and the palace of the Cæsars with the unwelcome "tidings of good." And in all this the Apostle rejoiced. In his bonds, and in the deep prison underneath the rock, his heart beat gladly at the thought that even enemies were preachers of Christ's name, and that gainsayers were evangelists.

Such is the manifold wisdom of God. "Surely," when the enmity of man preaches the cross of Christ, "the wrath of man shall praise Thee." The wise and the incredulous, the scorner and the fearful, the envious and the contentious, were all one in persecuting the holy Name; but He that sitteth in heaven laughed them to scorn. He poured upon them, as it were, the spirit of prophecy, and made them publish abroad the Name they were striving to destroy.

We see here a great law of Christ's providence over His Church. He furthers His own ends, not by affirmations only, but by negations; by faith and by unbelief, by truth and by heresy, by unity and by schism. It is a transcendent and intricate mystery, far beyond our intelligence. All things conspire to His purpose, and His will ruleth over all; not, it may be, to the purpose we ima-

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gine for Him, nor to our idea of His will, but to His own, not as yet revealed. These are thoughts very full of comfort in the present state of the Church on earth.

Besides the contention and strife of which St. Paul speaks, we have now a trial of a more perplexing kind. I mean, the multiplication of Christian sects, shading off almost into agreement with the Catholic faith; and, more than all, division and opposition in the Church itself. What, then, may we believe, would St. Paul have said at the sight of Christendom as we see it now? Would he have said, "Notwithstanding, every way Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice?" Certainly he would have rebuked us, "even weeping," for our heresies and schisms, for our bitter and irreconcilable tempers. He would have even desired to be anathema, "accursed from Christ,"[1] that the East and the West might again be one, and the West united in itself. He would have been "ready to spend and be spent," that all sects which have issued from the Church might be brought home again to its altars, and only enemies of the cross of Christ cast out. He would have condemned all separations, sects, and schisms, with a keen and indignant sorrow. But the question comes back again, Would he still

[1] Rom. ix. 3.

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have rejoiced that, though perfect unity in truth and love were impossible, yet "every way Christ is preached?" Would the publication of truth even in contention, strife, rivalry, and pretence, have given him cause of joy? Would he have said, "Rather so, than not at all: let Christ's Name be gainsayed, rather than buried in silence?" I think he would.

1. Because the name of Christ reveals the love of God. The mere knowledge that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;"[1] the mere publication and proclaiming of this great fact, without Church or sacraments, without creeds or Scriptures, is a supernatural gift of truth revealing the love of God. And this is an inestimable advance beyond the state of man without this knowledge.

How little do we lay to heart the love of God for the world which He has made! His love is the element in which it hangs and moves on its unerring path. The world itself, as His creation, the work of His hands, is an object of divine transcendent love. God hates sin, but nothing that He has made. To bear the print of His hand is to bear the impress of His love. All the effluence of His presence and power upon the world

[1] St. John iii. 16.

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before sin came was love. And since the fall, all His government and working among mankind has been the expression of His love. Even His sorest visitations, and the strokes of His anger, have been in love for man. He would have no life perish, but live for ever. He willed not that the heathen should perish. When He gave them up, it was because they first had given Him up.[1] No soul that ever sought to Him, or held by Him, was ever cast away. Doubtless, among the darkest people of the earth, He had servants and witnesses, yea, seers and prophets. In the midst of an idolatrous people, Enoch walked with God. Noah preached a hundred and twenty years. Job was a seer among the Midianites, and his friends had the knowledge of God. Abraham was called out of a people who worshipped idols "on the other side the flood."[2] Melchisedech was priest of the Most High God in Salem. Visions were sent of God to Abimelech king of Gerar,[3] and to Pharaoh king of Egypt.[4] Jethro was priest of Midian,[5] and a counsellor of Moses. Balaam was a prophet in the far East. Jonah preached repentance in Nineveh. Visions and voices were revealed to the kings of Babylon.[6] The Gentile world was full of tokens of the Divine

[1] Rom. i. 21, 28.
[2] Joshua xxiv. 2.
[3] Gen. xx. 6.
[4] Gen. xli. 1.
[5] Exod. ii. 16.
[6] Dan. iv. 31.

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power and Godhead, love and goodness: proselytes came forth from it out of Ethiopia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and all regions of the earth, into the courts of Jerusalem; and at the coming of the Name of Christ, it was instinct with the first motions of a higher life. Everywhere the Apostles found souls "that were ordained," that is, disposed, "to eternal life."[1] What do all these revealed testimonies prove, but that God has an election in nature as well as in grace; that His tender love has been working by inscrutable ways from the beginning, "reaching mightily from end to end, and sweetly disposing all things;" that He has mercy for all the creatures of His hand? What more do we need to prove that "God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;"[2] that Jesus Christ is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe?"[3] These divine facts reveal the will and desire of God to be infinite mercy and universal love.

If this be the condition of the heathen without the knowledge of revelation, either Law or Gospel, it is plain that every access of light is an approach to God. Simply to know that "God so loved the world as to give His Son" for it, is a revelation like the splendour of the rising sun. The mercy which

[1] Acts xiii. 48. τεταγμένοι. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

[3] 1 Tim. iv. 10.

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the heathen desired and hoped, this declared and proved. And as it wrought an entire change in their knowledge and conceptions of God, it must also have wrought as great a change in the affections with which they regarded Him. God was to them no longer an object only of thrilling fear, or of pale dubious hope, but of trust, thankfulness, and love. Their whole inward life would undergo a mitigation, and be mellowed to a more filial temper; and in their measure, they would be raised above their former state to a relation of hope and obedience, of purity and worship.

I have stated this at length, because it will help to set before us the condition of those Christians who, knowing little more than that Christ came to save the world, are indeed immeasurably below the blessed state of the regenerate in the Church of Christ, but immeasurably above the highest state vouchsafed to the heathen. If, then, the condition of these was an object of God's love and pity, and if the least rays of Christian light lifted them so high, what may we not hope for those poor souls, robbed of their birthright through no fault of their own, to whom, through envy and strife, a mutilated faith, bearing little more than the name of Christ, is preached? Sad and impoverished, and yet not utterly robbed of all: they have the name of Christ, the revela-

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tion of God's love, the knowledge of a Father in heaven; and these great truths are great spiritual powers, which work mysterious and mighty changes in the soul; changes which draw them as unconscious proselytes to the courts of the unseen temple, and order the dispositions of their spiritual life according to the law of love.

Surely in this the Apostle would have bid us rejoice in his joy. Imperfect and maimed, yet it is the living and life-giving truth. It both has life and gives life. Better to have this than to abide in the shadow of death. Any light is better than darkness, any food than famine: even crumbs of the "Bread which came down from heaven," than the husks of this fallen earth.

Thus far we have taken it on the lowest ground, supposing that the least measure of truth is preached. Yet even in this least measure there is cause for joy; for thereby the love of God in Christ is declared. And at this we may rejoice, leaving to Him to measure and to gather in what fruit He will.

If this be true of the least measure of Christian truth, how much must the force of the argument rise with every increase in that measure. As knowledge rises towards the perfect faith, every such advance is so much more of union between the spirit of man and the character and will of

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God. I am now speaking of knowledge only as a means of illumination and obedience, not as imposing the responsibility of attaining the perfect truth. It is enough, for the present, to consider truth as being in itself, and by the virtue of its own nature, a means of conversion to God. Every light which reveals God's love leads on towards conversion. How much more, then, will this appear as we advance into the fuller teaching of Christian doctrine among the less erroneous of sectarian bodies, or in the Nestorian and Eutychian Churches of the East. Among these are taught and believed the love and passion of our Lord, the presence and gifts of the Spirit, the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity. Imperfect and darkened as all these doctrines must be when rent from the unity and charity of the Church, yet they do so far bring the spiritual nature of man under the dominion of truth and the powers of the world to come. Taken at the lowest, this must surely be joy to all who desire to see God enthroned in His own world. If only it be that pagan rites and philosophical schools have consumed away, or have been transformed into Christian sects and Christian philosophies—that is, even if there were no faith, but only reason; no spirit of sanctity, but only a higher moral law; even so it would be a blessed and joyful sight,—a bright soft-

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ened twilight issuing from the illumination of the Church, and a ripening, it may be, of mankind for the reception of the full powers of faith. Let us not, like freethinkers, stumble at the mystery that the Church is not universal. All God's dealings are progressive; and all progressive dispensations have to our eyes an imperfect outline and discordant preludes, and a circumference or halo of indistinct and, as it were, of morning or evening light. Such is the Christianity which surrounds the Church.

2. Let us take another reason for rejoicing. The preaching of Christ, even in the most imperfect form, is a witness against the sin of the world. And what are these two great truths, the love of God and the sin of the world, but the two poles on which all our salvation turns? The mere sound of the name of Saviour, Redeemer, Ransom, and Sacrifice, is a testimony against the natural conscience. And so we actually find. Perhaps there is nothing more prominent among certain Christian sects than exaggerated theories of sin. So far the most imperfect teaching, by encountering sin in the conscience, prepares the way for the true faith; consciousness of sin being a perception of the spiritual nature, and a condition to divine faith. In this sense, then, all promulgations of Christ are forerunners of the

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truth. They work round about the suburbs of the city of God, spreading indistinct rumours of revelations yet to come. And besides this, there is a direct inward work wrought in the hearts of individuals, convincing them deeply of their need of something divine. The knowledge of God's love and of Christ's passion works mightily in softening or breaking the hearts of men, be they who they may. Alas, it is too true that thousands in the visible Church shew less love and less compunction than many who are in separation from the unity of the body of Christ. The powers of truth are not bound. They, like the presence of God and the nature of man, are universal. Wheresoever they alight, as seeds wafted by the winds, or by the sweep of tides, or by the flight of birds, though not sown in order, nor by the ministry of man, they germinate. Truth is a living and energetic principle, "quick and powerful;" like the ministering spirits, it is as a flame of fire. Though its home and rest be the Church of Christ, yet wheresoever it goes abroad, it lightens and penetrates, kindles and quickens with life. And therefore we see among those who are separate from the Church multitudes deeply convinced of personal sinfulness, yearning for some shelter and refuge, finding none visible except the Church alone, of which, their

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eyes being holden by invincible error, they cannot discern the true character and office. They are therefore forced to conceive to themselves an invisible Church: a pleasing illusion, most accordant with their state, and consoling to their conscious perplexities. But be their intellectual theology what it may, there can be no doubt that among them are to be found true and fervent penitents, who shall rise up in judgment with the visible Church, and shall condemn thousands. Certainly, then, we must rejoice that for such fruits as these Christ is preached. If the truth cannot be preached in its unity, then let us hope that it will tell by its own sanctity and force, even in the midst of division. If they will not have all their birthright, let them not be deprived of any fragment they are willing to receive from the fulness of their heavenly inheritance.

3. And to take one more reason. The preaching of Christ brings men under the law of responsibility. It reveals the four last things,—death, judgment, hell, and heaven; it testifies to the commandments of God, the law of charity, and the need of holiness. And all these things, addressed to the conscience in man, produce their own response of fear, hope, obedience. Considered only as a moral code, the Gospel is the most perfect rule that mankind has ever received. If it were

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only promulgated by a human legislature and enforced by a human executive, it would produce a state of social peace and personal purity higher than the science of politics had ever ventured to conceive. This is the basis of modern civilisation. Christianity has raised and ripened the whole theory and practice of government and jurisprudence; without making it religious, it has exalted it above the refinement of Athenian liberty and the sternness of Roman justice. A Christian nation means a people professing Christianity; but, as we see, there may be Christian nations partly, or even wholly, rent away from the unity of the Church of Christ. Still they retain their Christian character,—justice, temperance, order, benevolence, mercifulness, and the like. And yet all these are not the sanctity which is a note of the Church. They are the fruits of human responsibility, trained under a high moral discipline, and scrupulously directed in the fulfilment of the second table of the law,—the duty we owe to our neighbour. No one can look at such a people without a thankful sense of the goodness of God, in giving truth, not only as an object of faith, but as a rule of moral discipline; so that even where it is lightly regarded as the path to eternal life, it is still cherished as a law of order for this earthly state. What is the ripe civilisation, the

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fair peace and harmonious friendship of states and kingdoms, the alliances and relations of national systems, the temperate sway of princes, the liberty of subject people, the purity of domestic obedience, but a second crop of fruits shaken from the faith of Christ, as from a fig-tree in its later season? Even though nations still linger outside the vineyard, shall we not rejoice over such a fruitage as this? Though they refuse the whole truth, is it not a joy that even so much as this should be received, and with such returns? Surely every one who wishes well to mankind must rejoice. All that can be done to foster and ripen the elements of truth, to "strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die," is the duty and work of charity. To overthrow, on the plea of re-construction, is to do the office of one whose name is the Destroyer. God's temple is to be built up by a labour of construction which preserves with jealous and loving tenderness all that has life and truth. If only we would recognise this great law of the divine economy, full of wisdom and of love; if only we would strive to "edify one another," to add to and raise upward to perfection whatsoever of truth and faith exists in the most imperfect, we should win many a soul. Men are not won by contradictions, nor persuaded by refutations, but by the expansion, enlargement, and perfect exhibition of the truths

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they hold in germ. This is the divine rule of controversy, the only evangelical principle of conversion, the law of unity, truth, and love. Whereso-ever, then, the germs of the perfect faith are sown, therein let us rejoice in hope.

What has here been said manifestly lies open to a multitude of apparent objections, and some of the highest and gravest kind. It may be said that this is equivalent to denying the visibleness and the divine institution of the Church, the necessity and grace of the holy sacraments; that it substitutes personal sincerity for the true faith, and goes all length with the latitudinarian theory, which either makes truth indifferent, or God all mercy.

I say, these are apparent objections; for not one of them, as we shall see, really has any force.

All that has been said rests upon two undeniable truths.

1. First, that all truth has life in it to those whose heart is right with God. This is an axiom so absolute and clear that we need not fear to affirm it without limitation. Perhaps it may be said, "What, then, is this but the latitudinarian fiction, so long ago familiar in rhyme, which says that bigots only care for points of faith; that God looks to our life alone; and that, where this is right, we cannot, for the world to come, be wrong?"

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This saying, false as it is in its rhetorical aspect, is, with one comment, strictly true in its logical force. If right and wrong are predicated of the faith or doctrine of an imperfect believer, it is a contradiction in terms. But if they be predicated of his own life and moral state before God, it is an axiomatic truth. No man's life can be wrong before God, if it is right before God. The saying, then, is a mere paradox, a rebuke not undeserved by rigorists, who, while they cannot stand too stiffly for truth, may easily be too blind to the fruits of God's good Spirit. Why should we have any fear at all of adopting the whole proverb? Let no Christian fight, but suffer for the faith: and let us rejoice that no man can be wrong in his obedience, who, so far as his light goes in that obedience, is right. Nay, we may carry this much more boldly onward, and with the whole Catholic Church affirm, that no ignorance of truth is a personal sin before God, except that ignorance which springs from personal sin. The measures of truth possessed by, or presented to, individuals are so extensively determined by external states and circumstances over which they have no control, that multitudes never are brought face to face with the full orb of faith. Birth, nation, religious community, education or the want of education, faithfulness or unfaithfulness in parents and pastors,

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changes and contingencies of life, and the whole world of intricate and inconceivable agencies which mould and dispose the lot of individuals,—all these determine with infinite variety the measures of truth proposed to each. And we know that, "if there be first a willing mind, a man is accepted according to that he hath, not according to that he hath not."[1] And how shall they believe in that of which they have not heard?

Now this also opens a further and inner fold of this deep subject. Blameless ignorance does not arise only from the want of having truth actually proposed from without. The intellectual and spiritual perceptions within are so deeply formed and controlled by agencies under which we are passive, and for which we are, therefore, not responsible, that there may be an ignorance wholly without personal sin even in the presence of the full faith of Christ. Such is the state of unknown multitudes, who have been trained from childhood to regard certain errors with religious love, and certain truths with religious fear. These affections of the soul, matured in them by others, become almost instincts, and take their place beside the clearest dictates of conscience. Such persons have often no intellectual gifts to rise above their teachers, still less any powers and faculties to analyse

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 12.

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and unravel the texture of their religious perceptions. As they have been taught, so they believe. Filial love, dutiful submission, habitual reverence, humble self-mistrust, fear of wandering in religion and of illusion in eternal realities, consciousness of past mercies and still more of present blessings, —all these make them hold with the full power of reverence, affection, trust, persuasion, and religious perseverance to the teaching of their home and childhood. This is what theologians call 'prejudice' in its pure etymological sense—a judgment foregone, formed for us by others or by events; and this prejudice has always been held to excuse the error; and the ignorance founded upon it is to be counted invincible, and therefore no personal sin. Can we doubt that this great rule of compassion applies to the wide-spread and numerous branches of the Oriental Church, which for fourteen hundred years have lived and died in the Nestorian heresy? What but this has been the condition of children, women, poor and uninstructed souls, in the forty generations which have passed since that great schism? And does not the same principle apply to every Christian sect according to its measure, and to every individual born into it? And lastly, shall we not all, on all sides, have need to shelter ourselves under this law of tender and pitiful compassion at that great day

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when the members of Christ's Church, now miserably torn asunder, shall stand in the light where all truth is seen without a shadow?

Truth is given for the probation of man; the probation of man is not ordained for the sake of truth. God can prove, and from the beginning has proved, His servants in every measure of light, from the noon of night to the noon of day. We have the warrant of holy writ, that the Gentiles, who had received no revealed law, did "by nature the things contained in the law," being "a law unto themselves;"[1] and that by their law they should be judged. When St. Peter said, "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him and doeth righteousness is accepted of Him;"[2] it is true that he spoke, with design, only of the admission of Gentiles to the grace given to the Jews; but he enunciated a much larger application of God's law of grace. He denied that national distinctions were a bar to mercy, but he affirmed also that fear and righteousness are universally accepted of God. He thereby enunciated the great axioms of the kingdom of mercy, that no obedient soul can perish, no penitent be cast away, no soul that loves God be lost. If the heart be right with God, He will weigh the rest in a balance of compassion. Now, we have

[1] Rom. ii. 14. [2] Acts x. 35.

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already seen that even an imperfect preaching of the name of Christ tends to promulgate the great law of responsibility, the knowledge of sin, and the revelation of God's love; and imperfect though such preaching be, yet having this tendency, who will dare not to rejoice? "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets; and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them;"[1] that there might be no envy or strife, no clash or contradiction, no rivalry or variance, no schism or heresy, but "one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father."[2] This not being so, it being the permission of the Head of the Church that His passion should, as it were, be continued still on earth; that He should still hang upon the cross in a confused and contradicting world; let us be glad that His Name is preached, not only in His Church, but that even they who will not submit to its blessed law of unity, yet make our King and His kingdom known abroad. Wheresoever these truths fall, like the shadow of an apostle, they bear a healing witness of a world unseen, of a law of holiness, of a judgment to come. They bring the conscience and the will of men into relation with the Presence and will of God. Like sparks scattered from a light, each one contains the whole

[1] Numb. xi. 29. [2] Ephes. iv. 5.

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power of fire. Where it falls, it kindles; where it kindles, it burns on, hidden it may be and pent up, but, because pent up, intense. No eye but God's can read the mysteries which are received by implicit faith. We cannot tell what may be the clear spiritual perceptions of the darkest and most torpid intellect. Whatsoever, then, be the anxious fears with which we may look on—much more indeed for ourselves who have the fuller light than for those who have the less—to the great day when the Lord shall take a measured account of His servants, let us always rejoice that, where more perfect knowledge of Christ and of His kingdom cannot be had, "notwithstanding, every way Christ is preached," leaving the rest to Him.

2. The other truth to which I referred is this: that though all truth has life in it, yet the duty of believing the whole and perfect truth is still absolutely binding on pain of sin to all who know it. This at once lays the axe to the root of latitudinarian theories. It guards the compassion of God upon the sincerely ignorant as with a sword of fire. It is with the faith as it is with the light of heaven. After that God had said, "Let there be light, and there was light," He gathered it into an orb of brightness with a full and visible disc, and set it in the heavens. The light of the sun pours down its floods upon all the earth,—here with its

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direct and fullest splendour, and there by reflection of its rays; in some places it is noon, in others twilight; even in the day there are lights and shadows, and yet there is light enough for the works of men and for the service of God. So with the faith which He has set in the firmament of the Church. Within the sphere of its direct illumination it is full and cloudless, but far and near its lights fall obliquely; shedding lingering gleams, or refracted rays; guides, even in shade, to searching eyes and willing hearts, if right with God according to the measure of their light. But the sun's full orb shines out broad and unveiled in the horizon of the new creation. The Catholic Church, one, holy, apostolic, and the one faith once delivered to the Saints, are, to all who know them as such, the absolute and universal conditions of salvation revealed by God in Christ. When it is said, then, that no obedient or penitent man can perish, and no soul that loves God can be lost, it is because obedience, repentance, and love, are the great spiritual realities, to create and perfect which the Church was ordained. These realities of the Spirit are eternal; prophecies and mysteries are of time. The union of the soul with God is the supernatural end to which all sacraments are transient means. The atonement is infinite in price; the visible Church a finite and earthly mys-

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tery. God has bound us to seek His grace through His Church; but He has not bound Himself to give grace and salvation in no other way. His mercy is boundless, His Spirit infinite, His love as the great deep, His grace always overflowing. God be praised that the fountain of living waters, which makes glad the city of God, penetrates beneath the soil, and breaks up in secret springs, making pools in the wilderness. Is our eye evil because He is good? Did we not agree with Him? Shall we not take that which is ours because He may do what He wills with His own? What wantonness would this be. Whatsoever in His loving-kindness He may do out of His fold, "what is that to thee? follow thou Me." And if He raise up saints in Midian or Samaria, or send prophets to Horeb, or seers to Jezreel; where is our charity, that we would again tie the Hands that were pierced, by the bonds of our theology? God forbid; though His overflow of grace water the whole earth around the camp of the Saints, how can we but rejoice, even as they when they saw that "unto the Gentiles also" He had "granted repentance unto life?" Is it not enough for us to have the portion of the elder brother? "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

The force of truth working out of the Church, and the obligation of truth propounded by the

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Church, are two agencies and two principles, involving two obligations altogether distinct. Truth working out of the Church speaks by its own harmony to the reason; but propounded by the Church, it speaks also by the authority of God to the grace of divine faith. On us all revealed truth is binding. In one sense there is no greater or less among truths, for all are true, and all come from God. As with the law, so with the faith: he that shall keep the whole faith, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all. One authority runs through all and is in all—the authority of God. All truths, indeed, are not in one sense alike; for instance, the articles of the Creed and the history of the Apostles; but all are true, and divine faith receives all. To reject any is to offend against the revelation of the Holy Spirit. And this includes the whole divine order of the Church. Our Lord, when He sent the Apostles to baptise and make disciples, bade them teach men to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. The apostolic mission, therefore, had in it not only doctrines but sacraments, rules, and institutions; that is, it was a faith, worship, ritual, polity, government, — a visible kingdom, having order, power, and unity. In all and through all, as one inseparable whole, the Divine authority dwells and rules. Truth, therefore, in the Church

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is one, perfect, absolute, and binding; admitting no diminution or addition, election or choice. It is all contained in the baptismal creed, as is all the law of sanctity in the ten commandments, not expressly, but by deep implication; and the authority on which we receive both is one,—the Church teaching in the name of Christ. Be it once clear that so Christ has spoken in His Church, as well in the least as in the greatest we are bound. If He had made the washing of each other's feet a perpetual sacrament of humility, as He made the holy eucharist a perpetual sacrament of love, we should have been bound.

This, then, is the great antagonist of latitudinarian errors and proud indifference: not to weigh the value of truth in the balance of the individual reason, but to call upon the individual will to surrender itself to the sweet yoke of Christ. The name of Christ works, indeed, in might and in mercy among those who are separate from His fold; but they know little of the interior life of His Church who can see no tokens of difference even in kind. When has the Sermon on the Mount been seen living and full, even to its very letter, except in the unity of the Church? Where has the wonderful harmony of diverse and almost conflicting spirits of love and power, of softness and fire, of force and meekness, of lowliness and

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inflexibility, been ever seen but in the interior fellowship which adore Him present before the altar? There are two things which are never apart, perfect sanctity and perfect unity; and these are as the two witnesses of God which stand beside "the truth as it is in Jesus."

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SERMON V.

CHRIST'S GOING AWAY OUR GAIN.

St. John xvi. 7.

"It is expedient for you that I go away."

THESE words were spoken in the upper chamber on the night of our Lord's betrayal. He had celebrated the last Passover of the Old Testament, and had instituted the true Paschal Sacrifice of the New. Shadows had now passed into realities. The Incarnation of the Son of God had changed an earthly type into a heavenly substance. The true Lamb was now taken up for the sacrifice, and the true atonement was at hand. He therefore began to prepare them for His departure, knowing that His hour was come. In a little while they should see Him no more. Three days of sorrow, forty days of wondering joy, and then He should depart unto the Father.

For this cause He began to speak to them of

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a Comforter. Why, they hardly knew. A shadow had fallen upon them; but whence they saw not. They felt that sorrow was near; but they did not as yet understand His words. He then, as knowing their weakness, before He revealed their approaching loss, led them to thoughts of consolation. He used the manner and the tone of one who had to break some heavy tidings. He was slow in His words; throwing out hints, suggesting thoughts of solace, before He unfolded the inevitable truth. "These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you;" as implying, Soon I shall be with you, as you see Me now, no more. "I go My way to Him that sent Me." By these words He intended to prepare them not only for His death and burial, and for the three short days of His resting in the grave, but for His ascension into heaven, when He should go up on high, and sit down, until the end, at the right hand of God. When they heard Him speak of going away, they were filled with sorrow. To lose their Lord was to lose their all. They had lived in daily and hourly converse with Him, till they had come to live by Him and in Him as their very life. They had hung upon His lips, and learned the mysteries of the kingdom of grace; they had waited upon His divine hands, and seen the miracles of His power. His person

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was the pledge of His kingdom,—the earnest of the twelve thrones on which they trusted that they should sit with Him in the regeneration. All hung upon Him, and with Him all would depart. To lose Him would turn their hopes into a vain show, and scatter all their expectations as a dream. They would be utterly forsaken,—outcast from home,—spoiled of their Master's presence,—losers on every side, both in this life and in that which was to come. The world, with its hard, cold reality, boded to them a rough and suffering future,—a heavy reprisal for their rashness in breaking with its favour, and venturing all upon His word.

It was, therefore, to comfort and strengthen them beforehand that He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away. I go, but not for My own sake; it is for yours. Believe My word, that for your consolation I am departing. When I am gone, ye shall receive greater things than these. If I stay, they will not be given. If I go, I will send them. Ye shall have a Comforter, who shall abide with you for ever. To lose Me shall be your gain." Now this sounds strange and unlikely: as to them, so to us. They could ill understand how the loss of their Teacher, Lord, and Guide should be gain to them; nor can we perhaps, at least at all times, realise why it is better

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for us that He should have gone away. We often think, that to see Him would waken and support our faith, kindle our love, deepen our contrition, solve all our doubts, teach us all doctrines, and admit us into all mysteries. We long to put ourselves into the place of St. John or St. Thomas, and think that, by closer contact with His visible presence, we should be made penitent, faithful, and loving. We think, or at least feel and imagine, that the world is at a disadvantage, and that the Church has suffered a loss by the departure of our Lord; that if He were visibly among us now, the course and order of all things would be turned into a higher path, and would ascend steadily towards God. But in this we contradict His very words, and are blind to His manifest operations. It is expedient for us, no less than for them, that He should go away; that He should be no longer manifest on earth, but ascended into heaven. His departure was their gain, and it is ours. It is the gain of His whole Church on earth. Let us see how this can be.

1. And first, because by His departure His local presence was changed into an universal presence.

He had dwelt among them as Man, under the limitations of our humanity: in Galilee and Jerusalem, on the mountain and in the upper cham-

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ber, they had known Him according to the measures and laws of our nature. He had thereby revealed to them His very and true manhood. They had seen Him journeying, fasting, sorrowing, suffering; they had heard Him teaching by words of human and articulate speech; persuading by emotions of human and familiar sympathy. But this was only the prelude of their life of faith. They had yet greater things to learn. They had to learn His very and true Godhead; His divine and infinite Majesty. And this was to be revealed from an higher sphere and by a mightier revelation of Himself. God was manifest in the flesh: but their hearts were too earthly to conceive the fulness of this mystery. Sense bounded them about. As yet they knew not the perfection of His divine Person. While He was with them, they saw, heard, and handled: they knew "Christ after the flesh;" when He ascended, they "knew Him so no more." Their limited and sense-bound perceptions were enlarged and purified. They dreamed no more of an earthly kingdom, or of investiture with temporal honours. By His ascension He sat down on His Father's throne, and assumed His kingdom in heaven and earth. He made them to feel the mystery of His divine Nature: He dwelt with them after the manner of a divine Person. He had said, "I will not leave you comfortless;

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I will come to you." And again, "Lo, I am with you alway." And He kept His word: He came to them in the Comforter. The day of Pentecost was the enlargement of His Presence from a local and visible shape to an invisible and universal fulness. As the Father dwells in the Son, so the Son in the Holy Ghost. In the presence of God the Holy Ghost, God the Son is ever with us. The Eternal Word, Who from the beginning was in the world by His divine power and Godhead, and then dwelt among us in the substance of our flesh, is now with us not less, but still more intimately than before. As God, He dwells with us through the Holy Ghost, by His essence, presence, and power. But more than this: as Man He is also with us in all the truth of His incarnation. He is not with us in visible shape, nor in local dimension, nor in the configuration of His human form. In these finite and circumscribed properties of manhood He is at the right hand of God, visibly manifest and glorious in the midst of His heavenly court. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in His Church for ever. The Godhead and the Manhood in Him are so united as to be no more divided. The Divine Person of the Word made flesh, as it is indivisible, so it is every where and whole in every place. Wheresoever the Son is, there is the mind, spirit, heart, sympathy, and will of

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His divine humanity. By union with Godhead it has been exalted above the limits of our finite state. If I must speak in the words of our infirmity, I may say that His human soul, with its perfections, is above all conditions of place, and filleth all things. The character of the Lord Jesus Christ, His pity, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, love, tenderness, compassion, is shed abroad throughout all His Church. The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of the Man Christ Jesus; and the reign of His will, human as well as divine, is His kingdom.

And there are even deeper things than these. The mystery of the incarnation is not a mere isolated fact, terminating in the personality of the Word made Flesh, but the beginning and productive cause of a new creation of mankind. By the same Omnipotence which wrought the union of the Godhead and the manhood in the womb of the blessed Virgin, the humanity of the second Adam is the immediate and substantial instrument of our regeneration and renewal. It has, therefore, a supernatural presence throughout the whole mystical body of Christ. As the substance of the first man is the productive cause of the whole human race, so the Manhood of the second, in its reality and presence, is extended throughout the Church. It is the presence of God which

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upholds all the creation of nature: it is the presence of the incarnate Word which upholds all the creation of grace. It is the influx of the divine essence which supports the natural world: it is the influx of the divine incarnation which supports the world of the redeemed.

And this supernatural creation began from the ascension of our Lord into heaven. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."[1] "All things are put under His feet," and He is "the head over all things to the Church, which is His body; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all:"[2] that is, the production and overflow of His life and substance,—the fruit and fulfilment of His incarnation,—the complement and perfection of His mystical body. What is the Church but Christ's invisible presence openly manifested by a visible organisation? The Church is Christ mystical,—the presence of Christ, by the creative power of His incarnation, produced and prolonged on earth. Truly said He, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

2. And further than this. His departure changed their imperfect knowledge into the full illumination of faith.

While He was yet with them, He taught them

[1] Ephes. iv. 10. [2] Ibid. i. 22, 23.

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by word of mouth. But the mysteries of His passion and resurrection were not as yet fulfilled, and their hearts were slow of understanding. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you." His visible presence made divine truths sound strange and paradoxical. To hear Him speak as God: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" "I and My Father are one;" "All things are Mine, and Mine are Thine,"—these were hard sayings. What wonder if Philip should say, "Shew us the Father;" and Thomas, "We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"[1] While He was yet with them, these truths were veiled by His visible presence. The Truth itself lay hid in Him. Their minds were earthly, and interpreted all things by the rules of earth and sense. But when the Comforter came, all things were brought back to their remembrance. Old truths and perplexing memories received their true solution. Words they had mused upon in doubt were interpreted; sayings they had thought already clear were seen to have profounder meanings; a fountain of light sprung up within them, an illumination cast from an unseen teacher unfolded to their consciousness

[1] St. John xiv. 5-8.

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the deep things of God and of His Christ. Their very faculties were enlarged: they were no longer pent up by narrow senses and by the succession of time, but were lifted into a light where all things are boundless and eternal. A new power of insight was implanted in their spiritual being, and a new world rose up before it; for the spirit of truth dwelt in them, and the world unseen was revealed.

The coming of the Holy Ghost was in itself a revelation. The Father sent the Son to reveal Himself. The Son ascended up on high, and sent the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost came, revealing both the Father and the Son. The inward illumination of His own invisible presence united the consciousness of man with the Spirit of God. There is a language above all speech,—a teaching which needs neither voice nor vision, which passes neither eye nor ear. The inspirations of God come in manifold ways, yet are tied to no mechanical order. They transcend all organisations of sense; they come at times by insights and intuitions; by lights which fall inwardly upon the deep of our consciousness, shining by their own radiance, attesting their own advent from God. Such was the coming of the Holy Ghost. His inspirations were not by the tongues of fire, but by the lights of His own indwelling. This was the

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last and perfect act in the ascending scale of the divine dispensations: lifting man above sense and thought, space and time, into eternity, and the ever enlarging sphere of God's presence and kingdom. That which had been an object of sight became an object of faith. The Person once visible on earth had become the Head of a hierarchy of eternal truths. Mysteries, of which they had before seen only parts and fragments, now combined in unity and splendour to a full and perfect orb. The earthly history of the man Jesus Christ was taken up into the eternal mysteries of heaven. Then was fixed on high the heavenly stair by which God descends to man and man ascends to God. Then were revealed the mystery and glory of the ever-blessed Three; the depths of the Incarnation; the humiliation of the eternal Son; the exaltation of manhood above all orders of angels and spirits to the throne of God; the blessedness of the Virgin Mother; the passion of God; the descent of Life Eternal to the grave; the rising of Immortality from death; the opening of the heavenly court; the unity and communion of the Church in earth and heaven. All these divine realities stood forth in substance and in truth before the illuminated intuition of the Church. While He was with them, these things were hidden: when He departed, they shone forth "as the

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body of heaven in its clearness."[1] While He was with them, He was their living, perpetual, unerring guide; and they, visibly united with Him, were led with sure and advancing steps along the path of truth. When He departed, the Spirit of Truth took up all that He had revealed, and unfolded it with great accessions of divine illumination. He then opened a ministry of interior and perfect faith, which has guided His Church in all ages and in all lands unto this day. His own teaching was partial and local: the guidance of the Spirit is plenary and universal. And our Teacher departs not, but abides with us for ever: a guide ever present, though invisible; ever presiding, though in silence; unerring, though teaching through human reason and by human speech. The Spirit of Truth is Christ Himself by His Spirit guiding and teaching still; no more a slender company of slow and wondering hearts, but the whole Church of God throughout the world; sustaining in its spiritual consciousness, in the successive and continuous line of its spiritual and intellectual life, the whole mystery of God, the unfading image of the heavenly Truth. This is the divine gift of faith. And thus, again, He has fulfilled His word of promise, "It is expedient for you that I go away."

[1] Exod. xxiv. 10.

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3. And lastly, His departure changed the partial dispensations of grace into the fulness of the regeneration.

From the beginning of the world, the Spirit of God had striven with the sin of man and sanctified His elect; but His visitations were secret and unknown.

Under the Law, though more wide-spread and abundant, they were still uncertain and restrained. The fulness of time was not yet come, and the great promise of the Spirit was awaiting its predestined season.

Between the Law and the Gospel, though given in larger measure, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were but an earnest of the day of Pentecost.

The incarnation of the Son was a necessary prelude to the regeneration. It is a mystery peculiar to the person and kingdom of Christ. A new Head was needed for the restoration of mankind, and that Head must needs be man.

The ascension of the Son was the condition of the descent of the Holy Ghost: "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."[1] The coming of the Holy Ghost is the gift of the regeneration to us. He descended not as a power or principle, nor as an endowment or quality infused into the soul of man,

[1] St. John vii. 39.

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but as a divine Person to dwell in us. And His indwelling is after a manner unlike any before. What, then, is the regeneration for which the world waited? It is the incarnation of the Son of God. Our nature, which He had made sinless, deathless, and divine, from the time of His ascension into heaven was glorified. The second Adam began to give of His own spiritual nature, to multiply the lineage of His elect, and to gather His mystical family into one universal body. The agent in this divine work is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son;" and "whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."[1] That is, upon them He bestowed the glory of the adoption, the gift of the Spirit, the right of sons to cry, Abba, Father; a share in the Sonship and inheritance of Christ, a participation of "the divine nature,"[2] that is, of the divine manhood of Jesus Christ. It is bestowed upon us in its virtue and beginning now; it shall be made perfect according to the measure of our humanity in His kingdom. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "It doth

[1] Rom. viii. 29, 30. [2] 2 St. Peter i. 4.

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not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."[1]

The incarnation raised mankind to a higher life, and laid a higher law upon us: the coming of the Holy Ghost endowed man with power to walk in that higher and more perfect path. We shall see this if we compare the saints of the Old Testament with the saints of the New; or the Apostles with themselves, before and after the day of Pentecost. The spiritual presence of our Lord Jesus Christ endowed them with an infallible certainty, an inflexible will, and a measure of His own sanctity. They had sprung up from childhood into manhood. And their maturity is the root on which the Church is grafted. It was of this that our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, of them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What does our blessed Lord here intend, but that the state of the regeneration is so incomparably high, that the least within it is, not in personal attainment, but in spiritual gifts, higher than the greatest without it? And again He says, "Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of

[1] 1 St. John iii. 1, 2.

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His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[1]

Clearly, in these words He is promising, first and absolutely, a final reward, when, at the resurrection at the last day, all His elect shall be born again from the dust of the earth, perfect both in body and soul, but also, and inclusively, He is promising a spiritual kingdom from the time of the regeneration, which began from His own resurrection, and is now fulfilling in the world. It signifies the kingdom of grace, by which He dwells in us and we in Him, now in this life. It also ordains the princedom of the Spirit, which the Apostles hold unto this day in the Israel of God. They in their successors are the ministers and distributors of His grace, of His spirit, and of His sacrifice, at the font and at the altar, binding and loosing, opening and shutting with the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

This, then, is the regeneration, the last and crowning work of redeeming grace, for which God's elect were waiting. The saints of old, from Abel, had died in faith; "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." What is that "better thing," but the redemption of our manhood from sin and death in the person of Jesus Christ, and

[1] St. Matt. xix. 28.

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the power of this redemption applied to each one by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost? They too are now made perfect: they have been united to the incarnate God; and every soul so united to Him is united also to His whole mystical body, to the universal company of all saints in earth and heaven, to the communion of life, love, energy, worship, intercession of all His servants, in warfare and in rest. This is the new creation, rising and unfolding itself "into the measure of the stature of Christ;" or rather it descends from heaven: it hangs from the hand of God, and is knit together by heavenly sacraments and ministries of spiritual power. Into this mystical orb of light He is ever gathering His elect; sanctifying them by His indwelling presence, and sealing them for Himself. As they are made perfect, they pass onward and upward to sit and reign with Him in heavenly places, partakers of His nature and of His kingdom.

It is expedient, then, for us, that He is gone unto the Father. If He had tarried upon earth, all had stood still. It would have been as a perpetual promise of day, a lingering blossom and a retarded fruit, a lengthening childhood and a backward maturity. The work of God is ever unfolding and advancing. He must needs have come, died, and ascended. "Except a corn of wheat fall

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into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[1] If He had tarried with us, He had abode alone; the Comforter had not come; His mystical body had not been knit together; His truth and spirit had not dwelt in us. While He was upon earth, all was local, exterior, and imperfect: now all is universal, inward, and divine. The corn of wheat is not alone. It hath borne much fruit, even an hundredfold; and its fruit is multiplied, in all ages and in all the earth, by a perpetual growth and a perpetual reproduction.

The day of Pentecost is an ever present miracle. It stands in its fulness even until now, and we are partakers of its presence and its power Therefore the Church is one, because He is one; holy, because He is holy; catholic, because His presence is local no more; apostolic, because He still sends His own servants; indefectible, because He is the Life; unerring, because He is the Truth. And to perfect this mystery of grace, it was needful that He should go away. He departed, but only that He might come back in all the fulness of His presence. Our Lord Jesus Christ is with us still. He reigns and teaches in His Church. His presence is the life of the elect, the perpetuity of faith, the reality of sacraments. Baptism

[1] St. John xii. 24.

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regenerates; the keys of the kingdom bind and loose; confirmation strengthens; ordination sends in His name; the holy eucharist is a sacrifice before His Father, and a sacrament of life to His disciples, because with deeper revelations, and a fuller bestowal of Himself, He has come to us again, that, believing, we may have life, and that we "may have it more abundantly."

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SERMON VI.

CHRIST VISIBLE TO LOVING HEARTS.

St. John xvi. 16.

"A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father."

THIS was a strange saying, and a stranger reason: "A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me," and that "because I go to the Father." How should His going away be the pledge of their seeing Him again? What wonder they said, "What is this that He saith?" "We cannot tell what He saith." And yet these words are plainly and divinely true.

There have already been three manifestations of our blessed Lord, and there shall be yet a fourth. The three first ascending to the last, which shall be full, perfect, eternal.

First, He has been seen by the eye, when He came in our manhood: "God was manifest in the

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flesh."[1] "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory;"[2] "That which was from the beginning, ... which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon; ... for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it."[3] From His birth to His baptism, from His baptism to His cross, from His cross to His burial; by visible presence, by miracles of power in Galilee and in Jerusalem, in life and in death, He manifested Himself to the sight of men. And so again after He rose from the dead. He did indeed thus manifest Himself to those that loved Him,—to the company of women and to Peter, to the eleven in the upper chamber, to the five hundred in the mountain, to the disciples on the seashore, and to all His Apostles when, for the last time, He led them out to Bethany. They had kept His word, and loved Him; and He loved them, and shewed Himself to them. But this is not the manifestation promised here. That was but local, partial, and transitory; this of which He here speaks is something larger and more abiding.

Again, He has also manifested Himself to the ear. He gave commandment to His Apostles that they should "Go teach all nations." And "have they not heard? Yes, verily their sound is gone

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [2] St. John i. 14.
[3] 1 St. John i. 1, 2.

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out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world." "The earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." He has manifested Himself these eighteen hundred years to all the kingdoms of the earth. The name, the person, the love, the sacrifice, the presence of Christ has been revealed to the ear of all people. Who has not heard of Him, young and old, high and low, wise and simple? But neither is this the promised manifestation; for this too is an exterior revelation, made to all alike, to the good and to the evil, to those that love Him and to those that love Him not.

What He here promises is something special and interior, deeper and more intimate, the peculiar gift of those who "keep His commandments." It is a manifestation, not to the eye or to the ear, but to a sense above both hearing and sight; a spiritual sense, comprehending all powers of perception, to which all other senses are but avenues. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself to him."[1] And that "because I go to the Father." When I am ascended, I will return with a presence, not local, but in and above all place; not transient,

[1] St. John xiv. 21.

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but abiding; not visible to the eye, but to the heart, by a power of spiritual intuition. In these words He promises an illumination of the heart: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." And this presence is no mere figure, but a reality; this manifestation no empty metaphor, but a shewing of Himself to our spiritual sense; a perception which should be equal to the perception of sight in all fulness, vividness, and truth.

Let us therefore take an example. What does the sight of any one, as, for instance, of a friend, bestow upon us? What are its effects?

1. The first effect it produces in us is a sense of his presence. We know what his coming and going awakens. It may be we were waiting for his arrival full of other thoughts, busy or weary, or musing, or all but forgetful. When he came, we were wakened up in every pulse. All our whole heart and mind, with all its affections and attention, fixed upon him. We are called, not only out of our former works and thoughts, but out of our very selves. Our hearts go forth to meet him. He is there before us. We see him, recognise him again; he sees us, and fixes our sight upon himself. Some such effect is wrought in faithful hearts by this promise of our Lord. As God, He is ever present with us. He is in

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all things by His essence, presence, and power. But beyond this, as Man, He is with us still by the indivisible unity of Godhead and manhood in His person, by the perpetual and intimate presence of His mind, heart, and sympathy. The forty days of His tarrying upon earth were a revelation of His abiding presence with the Church for ever. They were a season of training, to prepare His Apostles and all who should believe in Him through their word, to live by faith in His unseen but personal nearness.

We feel the same, though perhaps less vividly, towards friends with whom we habitually dwell. Daily sight keeps up the sense that they are with us. Even when for a while withdrawn, home is still full of them: it is their home; our haunts are their haunts; the memory of something said or done, intended or desired, hangs about all we see. Every thing has some link with them. We have a living sense that they are related to us, and we to them; that we are one with them, and that they are never far away. Absence is not so much to be far off as out of sight, and to be out of sight is to be even more in mind. The inner faculties become quicker and more intense in those whose natural sight is wanting. They possess a sense above sight, bestowing all the inward perceptions of sight in a deeper way. If it has less of colour and form,

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it has even more of reality and truth. So it is with the spiritual manifestation of our Lord to hearts that see by love. As in the forty days while He tarried yet upon the earth, before He went up on high, though not always with His disciples, He was always near; though not always visible, yet He was always seen; for the sustained consciousness of loving spirits saw Him at all times by the vision of faith. He was, as it were, always meeting them, and saying, "All hail;" always standing in the midst, breathing on them, and speaking peace; always making their hearts to burn, and their understandings to break forth with new lights of truth.

So it is with those who love Him now. He shews Himself by a secret unveiling of His presence. Their whole life is full of a sense that He is near; and they know, by an inward faculty, that they are living with Him and for Him.

2. Another effect wrought by the sight of a friend, is a perception of his character. We learn what others are, not so much by hearsay as by intercourse. It is with character as it is with countenance. We may hear a person's look and figure minutely and vividly described; we may see also a perfect portrait, and know the outline and feature, the colouring and peculiarity of his appearance; but there is something which can never be de-

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scribed or drawn; something we call expression in the countenance,—a fineness of meaning in the lines, and change in the play of features; something which, like the tone of the voice, speaks, and alone can speak, for itself. What are all portraits to one sight of the very countenance? Much more is this true of character, which is a thing so complex, so fine, so mysterious, made up of so many parts, or rather of the balance of so many powers and gifts. We may as well try to describe motion or light. Read the fullest and most detailed biographies; imagine the most vivid picture of the subject; but what is all biography to one meeting? Then the moral life which is in the one speaks to the moral sense which is in the other by a language which has no written character. It is of a higher order of knowledge; of a sphere where all communion is direct, by intuition and mutual intelligence; where the alphabet is "Alpha and Omega,—the First and the Last." So is it in those who love the Lord Jesus. When He shews Himself by the illumination of the heart, then all we have read turns into reality. The holy Gospels rise up into a living person; they live and breathe before us. Then we understand and perceive, by a spiritual appreciation, His sanctity and pureness, His lowliness and patience, His meekness and tenderness, His love and sympathy.

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We feel with whom we have to do: what He is in Himself. We perceive that His presence, which was visible once on earth, has dwelt steadfast until now; and that the character of divine compassion recorded by evangelists is a continuous reality. It is as near, as real, and as full of grace as at Nain and Bethany. And our spiritual perception has been wakened by His presence to feel,—if I dare so speak, and why should I not?—to taste His character. We "taste that the Lord is gracious." Now this is a spiritual perception which only spiritual communion can bestow. And by this communion, in a way transcending the senses of our earthly nature, He manifests His character to those who love Him. This spiritual perception of His character by love is the beginning of His likeness in us. Love likens us to each other, and above all to Him. It is the power of assimilation: and likeness of heart is also an instrument of perception. It is by loving that we see and understand the reality of His perfect character, and are conscious of His compassion, ever present and encompassing us about.

3. We may take one more effect of sight. It gives us a consciousness of the love of a friend for us. There is something in his eye, look, and bearing, which is expressive above all words, and emphatic above all speech.

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When God was made Man, He put on human affections and human sympathies. The Divine love is boundless, all-embracing, infinite; human affections are particular, finite, and personal. He became our kinsman, brother, and friend; and He assumed all the affections of these human relations. He loved according to the love of kinsman and of friend. Particular affections, we know, are consistent with perfect love. The very name of "the beloved disciple" is witness enough. Out of His followers, He ever loves with especial love the children of the beatitudes. He loves, with a distinguishing love of friendship, those who are most like Himself. There are deeper things in this mystery of love than we can fathom. He says, "I *will* love him." But surely He does already love all His servants,—nay, all sinners, for whom He died—all creatures whom He hath made. But there is somewhat more in these words. There is a love with which, as God, He loved all mankind eternally; and another deeper love, with which He loved all whom He foreknew would love Him again. In His foreknowledge, all His elect people love Him and are loved. But there is a deeper mystery still. The Word was made flesh, and, as man, comes down into this world of time; He sees, one by one, those whom He foreknew made perfect in actual obedience. As, one by one, they love

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Him, He loves them, and shews Himself to them. When the disciple whom Jesus loved lay on His breast at supper, the foreknowledge of everlasting love had its fulfilment. So with every one who shall love Him unto the end of the world. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him;" that is, I will receive him, as the love of election is fulfilled in him, and I will make him know My love. "I will manifest Myself to him." I, who chose him before he yet was, died for him while he was yet a sinner, loved him when he loved Me not, will love him, with a manifold love, now that he loves Me again. "I will manifest Myself to him." He shall know Me, who, unknown, have done all this for him; unseen, have been ever with him; in childhood, and all ages of life; in sorrow and joy, sickness and health, in happiness and in solitude, in light and darkness, blessing and chastisement. He shall see Me, and feel My presence; know Me, and comprehend My love. He hath heard of Me "by the hearing of the ear, but now" his eye shall see Me.

"A little while, and ye shall see Me." And this spiritual sight is the very life of faith. Without it, the manifest presence of the Word made flesh would profit nothing. The beholding of His

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person here visibly before us, as in the temple or in the synagogue of Nazareth, would avail nothing to those whose hearts lack love and sight. We should look upon Him as they did, and say, Is not this the carpenter? We should behold Him even upon His cross, and gaze upon His five sacred wounds, with a hard unmeaning eye. To cold hearts they have no mystery or meaning.

We see, then, what is the promise, and who they are to whom it shall be given. It is the benediction of those who love Him. And this love is no dreamy emotion, no weak and fanciful sentiment, but a deep masculine reality, the life of an energetic character. "He that *hath* My commandments,"—that is, not in the intellect alone, but in the conscience, in the heart and in the will. "And keepeth them,"—makes them his law, and by that law guides his life. There is need of a deeper force than the imagination, of a stronger impulse than feelings and emotions, to form the spirit of those to whom this manifestation shall be granted. Let us, then, take two plain counsels for our guidance in seeking it.

1. The one is, to keep our hearts clear from all conscious sin. Where sin is, there Christ is hidden. Though He be with us from our baptism, yet while we sin He is as the light which "shineth in darkness, and the darkness compre-

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hendeth it not." Sin is the darkness of the soul. Though the whole firmament of grace and love shine above it, yet all is black and shrouded. Sinful Christians have Christ's commandments indeed, but do not keep them. Better not to have them at all, than, having them, not to keep them. But this is too plain to need more words. We have nearer dangers; for though we do not break His commandments, yet we may be most unlike His spirit. Our character may be the opposite of His, or, as we say, there may be an antipathy between His mind and ours, and then how shall He manifest Himself to us? What fellowship can there be between His humility and our pride, His purity and our soils, His meekness and our wrath, His patience and our fiery spirits, His self-denial and our self-indulgence? Do we not know that men of opposite characters are mutually unintelligible? What does the man who is all for this world understand of one who is living for the next; or the man who never prays, of one who is devout? As these are severed by a direct antipathy, so also are jealous, proud, selfish, vain-glorious Christians severed from their Redeemer. A veil hangs between them, and He is unseen. And hardly less is to be said of those who have unfeeling, apathetic hearts. Alas, are not they the great multitude of Christians, neither decisively holy or unholy,

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devout or indevout? How many there are who approve and commend, but have no delight in a life of faith. Meekness, lowliness, self-denial, devotion, are to them beautiful images, but tasteless realities. The love and the sorrow of our divine Lord have for them neither sweetness nor sharpness. To them He is not "precious." They are easy, calm, unexcited, unimpassioned. Often they commend themselves for their temperate, reasonable, judicious piety. In their own sight they may be blameless; but in His they are ungenerous, cold, illiberal, unloving. To such hearts He makes little manifestation of Himself. For them "He hath no form nor comeliness," no beauty that they should desire Him; and to them, therefore, He is veiled.

Now such as some of these we shall find ourselves to be; and so long as there is upon us any conscious sin, we cannot receive this special gift.

Let us, then, search our hearts day by day, and see what it is which hides Him from us. If we have never yet seen Him by His promised illumination, it is a sign that something in us must still be cleansed away. Morning and night let us seek it out; convicting our hearts by the perfection of His heart. There are two sure ways to keep the soul clear from conscious sin: the one is, uni-

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form obedience; and the other, prompt confession. Let us suffer nothing to harbour and fester in our hearts, but at once cast it forth at His feet by a pure and penitent confession. Even sins of the lighter kind, of thought and temper, if they are allowed to linger, make up by duration what they want in magnitude. They taint and estrange the heart, and make us shrink from His presence, until we have confessed them. This is the remedy of our imperfect service and our many infirmities. We may cast them all out before Him as our sorrows and our burdens, and He will not impute them to us. It is specially to hearts cleansed by confession that He shews Himself by His inward coming. Mary at the tomb is the pledge of His appearing to sinners who are penitents. And who can fear or shrink from laying open their hearts to such miraculous love, or of speaking the worst of themselves at the feet of His absolving pity?

2. The other counsel is, to ask, day by day, that He will shew Himself to you. For this manifestation of His presence, character, and love is not to be obtained by power of intellect, or by vividness of imagination, or by any effort of ours. We cannot reveal Him to ourselves. All that we can do is, to cleanse our hearts of their films and darkness, that He may shine into them. Nothing can we do more, but say, "Lord, lift *Thou* up the light of Thy

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countenance upon us." We cannot make the sun to rise upon the earth. But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."[1] We must ask of Him without fainting, that He will shew Himself. And there are three ways of seeking this great gift. One is by habitual prayer, another by quiet meditation, and a third, which is above all, by frequent communion. It is then that He specially fulfils His promise. As at Emmaus, so now, He is known in the breaking of bread. This is that commandment which we have of Him, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Happy are they who keep it well; to whom the altar is the centre of their worship, the object of their desire, the source of strength and peace. Blessed are they who say, "I will go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy;" to our God manifest in the flesh, but veiled in that pure mystery. The holy sacrament of His love and passion is the fullest realisation of His presence unto the end of the world. "Lo, I am with you." Let us so live, as to be ever drawing near. For what is so like to the days when He went in and out among them that loved Him? What so fastens upon us a sense that He is here; that He is come to us,

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

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and that He calleth for us? They who so live know what it is to be awakened and quickened as by the presence of some one greatly loved; or if they complain, as many do, of distant and cold hearts, even at the altar, it is often because their consciousness of how loving and how near He is, acts by an opposite effect, revealing to them, not what they have, but what they need. The more we know what He is, and feel Him near, the more we shall accuse ourselves, and see our own unworthiness. For His presence at the altar is all that we can endure in this life of earth. To behold more would be heaven, for which we are not meet. He is teaching us, little by little, to see His face unveiled. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." In heaven they shall be most blessed who have known Him most fully here. They here shall know Him best who see Him with greatest clearness. They see Him clearest now whose hearts are most like His own.

At His appearing to the disciples in Galilee, on the mountain where He had appointed them, "when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some doubted." They doubted not that He was their Lord, nor that He had suffered agony and death upon the cross, nor that He had risen from the dead; but they doubted their own certainty of

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sight, like as they who believed not for joy, and wondered; or as when they saw Him at the sea, and none durst ask Him, "Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." So it is now with you. It may be you are doubting, not of Him, but of yourselves; not whether He is with you, but whether your hearts have ever seen Him. Only believe for a little while: "a little while, and ye shall see Me." And there shall be no doubting then; when He shall be visibly revealed in the kingdom of the resurrection, and you shall be pure in heart to behold Him in the beatific vision.

What is a little while? A little more sickness, sorrow, mourning, and solitude; a little more of striving and persevering. A little while is soon over; and then we shall be changed into a changeless joy. Then "we shall see Him as He is." What, then, is "a little while," if in a little while we may see Him for ever?

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SERMON VII.

COMPLAINING A HINDRANCE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

JOB xxix. 2, 3, 4.

"Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!"

THESE are sad and bitter words, the complaining of a man who had once known days of peace and light, but was now in affliction. In years past, Job had lived in fellowship with God, encompassed with His mercies, full of His gifts. He had received blessings in the house and in the field, in the basket and in the store. He had his children round about him, and his people held him in honour. A change came over his life. God hid His face, and Job was troubled. The tempter received power to try his faith, and

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smote him with sore afflictions. Childless and spoiled, he sat upon the ground in his wounds and sickness, pleading with God and bemoaning his desolation. "Oh that I were as in months past!" This is a tone of mourning very common among men at all times, and in all trials of life: not only by the graves of past happiness, and in the loneliness of ordinary sorrow, but in spiritual sadness, in the heavy cloud which often comes down upon the soul even of God's true servants.

It is very common to hear those who have long served God speak of times past as times of joy, and of the time present as a time of declension. We have all our golden age. The season of childhood, or the first fervour of conversion, the first burst of conscious faith, the first exulting spring out of the bonds of a worldly life, when life seems over, and heaven already won: blessed days and nights, when even in dreams God seems to speak with us—all these are times which, in retrospect, have a peculiar brightness. After a while, they seem past away, and we say, "Oh that I were .... as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!"

Sometimes, indeed, these complainings have no reality; but sometimes they are true. For instance, people who have been brought up in a home full of helps to the spiritual life, sometimes

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pass into others as full of hindrances. Some, after having been earnest with imperfect light, on gaining greater light, grow, not without cause, dissatisfied with their state. Others, again, from various causes, voluntary and involuntary, sometimes slacken their speed, or they fall into a scrupulous, fearful, and self-vexing mood, in which their very earnestness becomes a danger. If they had less fear, they would have less scruple, and more peace in God. Such people are very apt to use this complaint. They remember what they were; they feel what they are: it is as joy to heaviness, strength to weakness, the light of God's countenance to coldness and desolation. What, then, shall they do?

1. First, it is most necessary that they should learn to look out of themselves.

This sounds strange advice. How, then, they ask, can we examine our own hearts? And if we do not examine them, how shall we either correct our faults, or even know them? It is not to be denied that there is a difficulty in this. And yet we know that we may take a wise and sufficient care of our bodily health, without becoming fearful or fanciful, or, as we commonly say, valetudinarian. It all depends upon the manner and the tone of mind. We all know that fancies beget diseases, nay, are diseases in themselves. So it is

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with the spiritual health. Self-examination will be healthy or unhealthy just as we make it. One person will use it with a perfect habit of self-forgetfulness, and another will be haunted by a perpetual self-contemplation.

There is no doubt that the habit of looking into ourselves, and dwelling upon ourselves, produces a train of spiritual evils, such as scruples, sadness, fearfulness, misgiving, doubting of God, shrinking, depression, despondency, weakness, religious egotism, and the like For in truth, many look into themselves when they ought to be looking to the Sacrifice upon the cross. Some do so from want of faith, some from self-trusting, some from self-love, some from mere natural feelings,—from the simple emotions of flesh and blood, chafing at themselves, and resenting their own faults, forgetting what they are, and why redeemed. There is no doubt that much of the sadness and depression people indulge, has its root in self-love. They are vexed to find themselves such poor creatures after all. They have been aiming high, and their pride ill brooks such falls. They have been passing themselves off, at least in their own eyes, for mature and advanced Christians, and their vanity is mortified to find sins and follies of which even worldly people might be ashamed. Then they grow saddened, sullen with

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themselves, disheartened, and sensitive to every vexation.

But it is not always for such reasons. Sincere and humble minds often give way to fears at the clearer insight into their own sinfulness. It is a depth which we can hardly bear to look into. They who know the most of it know but little. Who can tell what he is in the sight of God, or even of holy angels? We cannot hold, all at once, in our consciousness even the acts of sin which we have committed in our past life; how much less our sins of word, thought, and imagination; least of all, the secret sins of our will. In God's presence, what a sight is a diseased soul, what soils, stains, and wounds; what distortions and running sores; what a mixture of darkness and fire are the passions and the intellect! What a miracle of sin is ingratitude, hardness, selfishness, sloth, lukewarmness, infidelity even at the foot of the cross! No one really knows himself as he is. God alone can measure and endure this revelation of our personal sinfulness. The most we see of it is but a little. There are two things which man cannot see and live, the Divine Majesty and his own sin. God in His tenderness veils us from ourselves, lest we should see ourselves, and die. Therefore it is not to be wondered at, if earnest and self-searching minds should, by

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poring into their sinfulness, at last prey upon themselves. They do it with a pure intention, and with a zealous hatred of sin. The more keenly they hate evil, the less they spare themselves. It is a zeal which eateth them up. And they continually mourn over some golden age which is past; some season when all was fair and bright; when they think they were less soiled and darkened, and God was more sensibly about them. But this, indeed, is not the truth. They were always what they are, only they knew not then what they know now. There has been no change, except in their consciousness of sin. What then slumbered is now awakened; all the change that has passed on them has been, not for the worse, but for the better: when they were unconscious of their sin, they were further from God; they are nearer now, because they see themselves to be exceeding sinful. It is He who is revealing it to them: it is His very nearness which awakens their consciousness. And they see not His light, but their own shadow, and this affrights them.

Now, for such persons, it is most necessary that they should be drawn out of themselves. A sincere conscience will never fail to keep up a sufficient self-examination; it may be left in a kind of passive sovereignty, to act in defence and as a safeguard. But the active powers of their mind, the

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intellect and reason, need to be drawn outward. As in the wilderness the people of God were bid to gaze, not upon their burning wounds, but upon the serpent of brass which was lifted up to heal them, so these self-vexing spirits must look out upon the cross.

2. And for this it is needful that they should realise more and more the objects of faith. While we look into ourselves, these become faint and dim. They must be fixedly and intently gazed upon to be habitually realised. When I say the objects of faith, I mean especially the presence and love of God, the sympathy and passion, the patience and tenderness, of our Blessed Lord, the presence and long-suffering of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly court, the communion of Saints, the love and ministry of angels; the whole world unseen and eternal. These are the changeless realities of faith, by which souls are drawn from this earthly and sensual life into harmony with the will and kingdom of God. They have a power to cleanse, sanctify, transfigure; to the sight of habitual faith, they become more near, visible, and real than the world we see. For all that we here behold are forms, shapes, and shifting outlines. This material world is not eternal, neither is it our home. It cannot endure for ever; we shall soon pass from it; itself shall soon pass away. Our home

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is in a supernatural order lifted above this world, to which even now we are related. It is only by going forth into this eternal sphere, living in it by faith, realising the truths and laws of the divine kingdom, the presence, personality, and love of our Redeemer, the mystery and majesty of the ever-blessed Three: it is only by this that the soul of man can be drawn away from its own evil. Except God be its centre, it will be a centre to itself. No creature will bear its weight; no created love can stay its yearning after rest. And if it find none, it will consume itself with chafing against its own miseries. It will never leave off to harass itself by brooding upon sin, until it has lost its morbid consciousness of self in the presence and love of God.

All this is so plain, that it need hardly be said. The true question therefore is, How shall such self-vexing, self-depressing minds escape from themselves into these blessed and sustaining realities? If they could do this, it would be all well. It is because they cannot do this, that they are saddened and cast down.

1. The first counsel to be given them is, to clear their mind of scruples. But this is their very disease. It is from this they desire to be set free. If they could clear their mind, then they would have no further trouble. They must

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begin, then, by searching out and clearly defining the cause of their scruples. If it be indulged faults, or favoured infirmities, or conscious omissions, or known unfairness with their conscience, or unresisted temptation, or willing indevotion, then let them confess it simply and clearly at the foot of the cross. Only let them guard against indulging in undefined and vague discomforts. We all know what it is to feel that something is vexing us, even while we cannot remember what it is; we feel ill at ease, and yet cannot tell why; it takes some moments' recollection to recall it; but the burden and sadness abide still upon us, though the causes are forgotten. It is just so in spiritual things; and needs to be much watched against.

But if a person shall say, "I know what my trouble is, and what it springs from; and I have confessed it again and again, and yet I cannot find peace. I feel sure something is amiss. I cannot assure myself, and be at rest." Then theirs is exactly the case intended and described by the Church. "If any man cannot quiet his own conscience," let him come to some minister of God, and open his grief. The best course for such persons is, simply to follow the Church's counsel: to go to their pastor, confess their trouble in the presence of Christ and in the hearing of

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His servant, and receive the benefit of absolution. Then let it be a point of faith with them to trouble themselves no more. Let them simply "believe the word that Jesus hath spoken, and go their way." "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." "Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Let them believe this with simple faith, as they believe the mystery of the Incarnation, and of our Lord's presence in His Church. And let them cast away all scruples; for scruples bring fears, and fears a shrinking dread; and these bring despondency, which is a sin against hope; and this brings estrangement, which is a sin against love. What is all this but to dishonour the miraculous compassion of our Lord, and to hinder the peaceful sanctification of their souls? There is hardly any spiritual disease more hurtful than scruples. They stunt and wither the spiritual life, and bring the soul into a bondage from which the Blood of Christ was shed to set them free.

2. Another counsel is, to live in the habit of frequent communion. There is no means so powerful to draw us out of ourselves as the holy Sacrament of our Lord's presence. None so sets before us the realities of the spiritual world. In all other acts of the spiritual life, our minds depend chiefly on their own powers. In reading holy Scripture,

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we are sustained by our own intellectual acts; in prayer, we depend upon the strength and vividness of our interior affections: in both, our minds act upon themselves. But in the holy Communion we are in the very presence of our Lord. We see before us in a mystery the incarnation, the atoning sacrifice, the love and passion of our Redeemer, the love and mercy of the Father; "the flesh, which is meat indeed; the blood, which is drink indeed"—the fountain of cleansing, strength, solace, perseverance. We there go out of ourselves to Him. The very reason why we come is, because we are empty, fainting, and weak; we come that we may be filled out of His fulness. When we go to the altar, we go to the entrance of the world unseen; to the spot where the visible and invisible worlds unite. The oftener we draw near, the deeper will be our sense of these eternal realities. The oftener we communicate, the worthier we shall be for holy Communion; the deeper our humiliation, the ampler our self-accusing, the simpler our trust in the pardon and help of our Lord. And as there is no means so direct to deepen in us a sense of His love and nearness, so there is none so effectual to make us forget ourselves in habitual remembrance of Him.

3. And, for a last counsel, it is good for such persons daily to exercise their minds upon these

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unseen realities. We spend time and care in cultivating the powers of the ear and of the voice, of the eye and of the intellect; all the faculties which are given to this world's service are carefully trained and exercised. But the spiritual powers of the soul we leave without discipline or culture. How can we hope to meditate without practice, any more than to reason or to calculate? We know how needful it is to apply our powers to the sciences of this visible world, and yet we live as if we thought the unseen world to have no mysteries, or our souls to need no discipline. Therefore it is that we have, at best, faint images, often none at all, of the only true and eternal reality. Towards the heavenly world, the minds of many are a mere blank. This world overspreads their heart with its ten thousand characters and reflections. Their faculties are quick and practised in all that bears upon this natural and earthly life; but of the spiritual world, and of its supernatural order of truths and laws, they have but dim and clouded impressions. What wonder if such minds turn inwardly upon themselves? They dwell upon their strongest ideas; and these are not the ideas of divine and heavenly realities, but of their own turbulent and depressing consciousness.

This is the reason why their prayers are distracted, their communions cold, their sense of the

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Divine pity, love, and pardon, so faint and low. What they need is a vivid and habitual perception of the Divine Presence and of the mysteries of faith. For this end, it is good for them to meditate daily on the love of God, on the gift of His Son and of His Spirit; on the Passion of our blessed Lord, on the pledges of His miraculous pity, and of His yearning desire of our salvation. And such meditations ought not to pass away in mere processes of thought, in transient workings of the intellect; but must spread through the whole spiritual nature, and issue in acts of faith, hope, and love. When I say acts, I do not mean a mere recital of the objects and grounds of faith, hope, and love; but such an exercise of the heart and will as may awaken a consciousness of personal faith, hope, and love. For these are spiritual habits, needing to be trained and disciplined, as much as meekness, patience, humility. Nay, far more, inasmuch as they are the active powers, the moving energies of the whole spiritual life. It is by them God quickens us. They are the threefold working of His Spirit in us, uniting us to the Person of His Son, and through Him to the kingdom of the Resurrection, and to the Source of everlasting life.

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SERMON VIII.

SELF-ACCUSATION.

St. Luke vii. 47.

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."

THIS passage of our Lord's life, when He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, and the words He spake to Simon and to this penitent sinner, are too familiar to need recital. We may therefore turn at once to some of the instructions conveyed by this event.

We see in it a type of His whole kingdom upon earth, of His ministry of forgiveness, and of the various spiritual states to be found among His servants.

His words to Simon, though full of tenderness, had a tone of divine upbraiding. The Pharisee was no doubt a righteous man; but he had no loving and lowly affections. He called Jesus "Master," but he honoured Him with a cold, distant propriety. He gave his Master no kiss;

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he had neither ointment for His head, nor water for His feet; and yet the name of Simon was not known in the city as a sinner.

But this poor sullied soul, a by-word among men, had no cold reserve, no false shame hiding her true shame; in the sight of all men she broke through to the presence of her Master. He had roused her to know her misery; He had brought her to repentance and to herself. Her whole heart was love, sorrow, and self-accusation. Therefore she received the divine words of absolution: "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

The point to which we may specially direct our attention is this self-accusing spirit: its necessity and its blessedness.

1. For, first of all, it may be said, that the kingdom of Christ is founded upon those who accuse themselves of their sins. It has both an exterior and an interior foundation; an outer and an inner court. On His part it is a perpetual ministry of absolution; on our part, a perpetual confession.

He died that He might absolve all sinners. To dispense the absolution purchased in His own blood is His own sovereign prerogative. When on earth, He exercised it in person. His words gave perfect pardon both in earth and heaven. He said to the penitent, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and

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all was blotted out. This was the application of His own redemption to individual souls: the in-gathering of the fruit of His own cross and passion. And this ministry of forgiveness is of perpetual necessity.

His absolution from sin is as necessary to all penitent and self-accusing sinners now as it was then, and ever will be to the end of the world. And He has not ceased to dispense it. His love and pity were not dried up when He ascended into heaven. Therefore He left still on earth the same power, against which Pharisees and unbelievers cavilled, bequeathing their very words to the inheritors of their unbelief: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" He said to His Apostles, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you:" —that is, with the same mission of forgiveness: "All My communicable authority is in your trust for the life of the elect."—"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."[1] He thereby entrusted to them the prolonged exercise of this His own prerogative. The very same full and divine power of absolving all who accuse themselves is in His Church now, and shall be

[1] St. John xx. 21-23.

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till He comes again. This is the great commission which includes all besides. He gave to His Apostles the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and with them all power to open and shut, to bind and loose. Baptism is an exercise of that sovereign power. The remission of original sin is a full and plenary application of the heavenly keys. Children born into this world of sin are thereby admitted into the kingdom of God. So also is the special absolution, which, like baptism, is given to individual souls, one by one, on distinct and penitent confession: and so too the remission which is given in the holy Eucharist, and in other acts of the Church, by which lesser sins of incursion and infirmity are forgiven: all these are exercises of the one great absolving power which springs from the person and the passion of our Lord, and is continued by His presence through the hands of His pastors, in every age, until this day. The ministry of reconciliation is always at work; the blood of the Good Shepherd is ever being applied to the souls for whom He died.

But this continual absolution on His part demands a continual self-accusation on ours; the one is as necessary as the other. And therefore it may be truly said, that His kingdom is founded on those who accuse themselves. They are its true and enduring foundations. When all empty and

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false Christians shall pass away, they shall be found united to Him Who is eternal. The kingdom of Christ descends from heaven to earth, having three distinct companies united in one fellowship; those who are with Him on high, sinless and unfallen, that is, holy angels, who never sinned; another, fallen, but sinless now, the spirits of just men made perfect; the third, still on earth, fallen and sinful, but repenting and kneeling at the foot of the cross, accusing themselves before Him night and day. Such is His kingdom: part in heaven now, arrayed in white, and crowned; part waiting upon earth, in sackcloth and penance still. This is the Church visible on earth, the congregation of the faithful, that is, of the baptised. But baptism is an outward grace, which unites penitent and impenitent in one; repentance is an inward bond, which unites none but His true servants. And of repentance there is one unbending and absolute condition—a true self-accusation at the feet of Jesus Christ. There is no exemption from this law. Baptism without repentance avails nothing, and repentance without self-accusation is impossible. In the midst of the visible Church He numbers, by direct intuition, the fellowship of true penitents. In them He dwells, and to them He listens. He has no communion with those who do not know their need of

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His absolving pity. This law of repentance is laid on all, even on the greatest saints: it often seems to press more heavily on them than on others; for as they have more sanctity, they have more of love; and as they have more of love, they have more of sorrow. As the light rises upon them, they see more clearly their own deformities. It is the greatest light of sanctity that reveals the least motes of evil; as things imperceptible in the common light of day float visible in the sunbeam.

And if this is true of those in whom our dull eyes see so little amiss, how true must it be of ourselves! What ought our whole life to be, but a life of self-accusing? Can we come into His presence without shrinking? Does not every thing accuse us of sin? God and His holy angels, our Lord Jesus Christ and all the company of heaven, our fellow-Christians and our fellow-sinners, the accuser of the brethren and our own conscience; and if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out. Our whole life, from childhood, rises up against us. Each several age is a distinct witness. Every season, and every year, by our whole inward consciousness bears some witness against us. Happy for us if we so feel and realise our true state before Him! It is a token Who has come to us. It is the absolver coming to convince, that He may pardon. When we

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repent, we are His by a twofold bond. We were already His by baptism; we are His now by penance. He has revealed Himself to us by faith; He is now revealing us to ourselves by an awakened consciousness of sin. He is drawing us within the inner circle of His kingdom, where He sits in the tribunal of self-accusation, arrayed in the white stole of His eternal priesthood, ever saying, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" "Go, and sin no more."

2. And this further teaches us that self-accusation is the test which separates between true and false repentance. Among the members of the visible Church, the faithful and unfaithful may be, for the most part, easily distinguished by their open and manifest lives; yet among the seemingly faithful, it is not always easy to discern the truly converted from those who have never in heart turned to God. Many seem to others, and to themselves, to be faithful Christians, who have little penitence; and many are believed, and believe themselves, to be penitents, who have never truly repented. The one only sure discerning test is the spirit of self-accusation.

Under all the manifold appearances of religion and of repentance, there are at last two, and only two, states or postures of mind: the one is self-accusation, the other self-defence.

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This runs deep into the conscience and the heart.

I am not speaking of hypocrites, who live grossly and profess fairly, nor of the more palpable forms of irreligion; but of persons outwardly blameless, and of strict observance in religion: such, in a word, as Simon the Pharisee. Their very freedom from grosser sins generates a spirit, which in the world would be called sensitive honour, in religion is self-righteousness. Their theory of the Christian life is, to be upright, faultless, without soil, without reproach; to have a consciousness of their own integrity, justice, and goodness. And such they often really are in their dealings towards men. In the outward keeping of the second table they seem beyond blame. And yet they fall far short in all things towards God,—in love, worship, devotion, humility, abasement, repentance, spiritual affections, realisation of the sympathy and passion of our Lord, and compunction under the sense of a fallen and sinful nature. Their perceptions of God's holiness, of the piercing spirituality of His law, and of the malignity of sin, are dim and languid. Therefore the consciousness of their own inward state is shallow and untrue. Their whole effort is to clear themselves of such sins as strike the world's eye; they have little shrinking from the eye of God. They believe its uni-

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versality by an intellectual conviction; but they have little feeling of its purity, which is known only by a spiritual perception. Moreover, their own inward eye is short of sight. And in the consciousness of their hearts they find no startling sins. Sinfulness, as distinct from sins of act, is, for their conscience, an idea too fine and impalpable. They fall, therefore, into a spirit of security, which is a spirit of self-defence. Their confessions are close, vague, qualified, and apologetic. They feel no need to confess to any but God alone. They think that it is well, perhaps, for greater sinners to use special humiliations and special helps; but they conceive that they can well enough quiet their own conscience with God in secret. I do not say that this may not often be true; but no one can deny that it may as often—some will perhaps admit oftener—be false. It is strange how dry and unloving such hearts often are towards the person of our Lord. There is a cold, exact, judicious, and commendable propriety, an avoiding of extremes and emotions of enthusiasm and irregularity, which, if there were but life, depth, and fervour, would be exemplary. Without these things, they become heartless, frigid, and self-complacent.

It is very difficult to convince such hearts of sin. The searching words of a pastor sound to

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them as reproofs; the lightest noting of omissions is taken for rebuke; the gentlest admonition is received as charges against their character. Their pastor seems to them as an accuser, and they must needs be their own defenders. Who that has had the oversight of souls has not known how much of this spirit of self-defence lives in the heart even of the good?

And if it is so with such persons, how much more with the less religious, who, the faultier they are, have generally a more vivid spirit of self-defence! How sullen, estranged, and full of offence they grow, when faithfully admonished; and how dangerous and useless is such a spirit! How useless, because it is but a little while, and a death-bed or the day of judgment will force them to behold their very selves. How dangerous, because there is no greater slight and provocation of the majesty of God. Nothing so deafens the ear against both warnings and promises, nothing so hinders the influx of divine grace, and so estranges the heart from the pastors of Christ. Instead of friends, guides, physicians, comforters, they become censors and accusers. The whole heart and will is turned away from them. We become pursuers of the unwilling, not receivers of the willing and penitent. It is the habitual thought and care of these self-defenders to elude their pastor's eye, and

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to conceal their festering wounds. Self-defenders fly from his sight and voice, as self-accusers seek it. The whole tide of the soul is turned in the wrong direction. And the minister of reconciliation waits, in sadness and silence, till the heart, knowing at last its own plague, opens of its own accord. This is the sure discerning test which separates the penitent from the impenitent in the interior court of Christ's kingdom.

3. And hence we see that the true source of this self-accusing spirit is love. A heart once touched by the love of Christ no longer strives to hide its sin, or to make it out to be but little. To excuse, palliate, or lighten the guilt even of a little sin grates upon the whole inward sense of sorrow and self-abasement. "Against Thee, Thee only," is the language of true penitents. The wrong done to God and the hardness towards our crucified Lord are their chief motives to repentance. They have no peace but in laying their sins to their own charge. The remembrance of sin makes them to feel ungenerous and heartless. They have nothing left but to turn accusers of themselves; to take part against themselves before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ. They come with a forward and earnest will, to lay open their own grief, and to bear their own shame; for in their conscience there is a

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presence which opens them from within. He that entered when the doors were shut, passes within their heart; and the iron gate, so close, heavy, and impenetrable, opens of its own accord. Their sorrow is not turbulent, clouded, and unquiet, as the sorrow of self-justifying minds when they are detected and reproved, but gentle and soft, with a brightness even in its shadows. It is a sadness which humbles and sanctifies, making the will pliant, and even the words of self-accusing to be sweet. "While I held my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining; for Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture is like the drought in summer. I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin."[1] So long as we defend ourselves, God accuses us, and we go heavily all the day long, our hearts glowing and smouldering within: so soon as we accuse ourselves at His feet, God and all the powers of His kingdom shelter and defend us. This is our true solace and relief.

Now there are two signs by which we shall know whether our confessions are the self-accusations of penitent and loving hearts.

[1] Ps. xxxii. 3-6.

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The first is, that our confessions be humble. The Pharisee, in the parable, stood and prayed with himself, as separate from the common herd: Simon invited his Master, and sat at meat with Him. Many give thanks, not for what God has made them, but for what they are; and bid themselves to their Lord's presence, "feasting themselves without fear." They confess, pray, communicate, as a matter of right and undoubted freedom; never staying to ask, Am I meet to draw near? am I worthy that He should come under my roof? The words of Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," perplex them; they think them contradictory and unmeaning: they desire His presence, and they think that enough. Not so he that "stood afar off, and smote upon his breast," accusing himself in the sight of God and man; not so she that had no care or consciousness of cavilling eyes, kneeling at her Redeemer's feet. This is one sure sign of a true penitent: a willingness to be humbled, to bear shame before man as well as before God; to go alone into the presence of men and angels, with no excuses or diminutions, no inculpations of others, or mitigating pleas. "Every man must bear his own burden," when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed; and a humble confession strives to anticipate that hour of isolated trial,

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and to fall down alone, as guilty above all, before the judgment-seat of Christ.

The other sign is, that it be an honest self-accusing. And to this honesty it is essential that we should use a moral diligence, that is, a sincere, careful, and leisurely attention to remember and to recount the sins of our past life and of our present state.

It is plain, indeed, that no man can recall the whole tissue and train of his past life; no human memory can store it up, no human consciousness can sustain it. Therefore it is enough that we confess all we can remember, according to these three rules.

First, the *kind* of our sins: not in vague general terms, such as, "I am proud," or "I am angry," and the like; but specifically accusing ourselves of the instances in which we have so offended.

Secondly, we must confess the *number* of our sins: not strictly every act, which is impossible, but morally; that is, whether they have been *isolated* events, or *frequent* and *habitual*.

And lastly, the *circumstances* which may change the character, or aggravate the sinfulness of what we have done: as, for instance, the *persons* against whom we have offended; for an act of disrespect is far guiltier if committed against a parent than against an indifferent person: and the *time*; for

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sins derive a peculiar character from the season; as, if we sinned after great warnings, or in the midst of great blessings or chastisements. And again, the *manner*, that is, whether deliberately, and with mature intentions; for even lesser sins have greater guilt when they are committed with slighter outward temptation, and therefore with stronger inward sinfulness; or whether against motions to forbear; or persisted in after the moment of temptation, by the obstinacy of a perverse heart. These plain rules will be enough for a sincere conscience; for where the will is right, rules are but little needed.

Humility and honesty, then, are the two sure signs of a sincere self-accuser: where these are, we may be strong in hope that the grace of a loving and penitent heart has been bestowed by the Spirit of God.

How pitiful and tender is this great ministry of peace! All that the Absolver demands of us is, that we kneel down before Him and condemn ourselves. What miracles of Divine compassion are working day by day! Throughout His whole Church on earth the Blood of atonement is perpetually descending,—sins are perpetually blotted out for ever, hearts cleansed for eternity. There is a strange contrast between the outer and the inner courts of His temple. Some who seem nearest to

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the kingdom of God are farthest off; such as the unhumbled, unconvinced, who dissemble, and profess; pray, and live without a law upon their will; communicate, and have no shrinking when their unworthiness meets His searching presence: and such too as are impatient of a law or a truth above themselves; self-flatterers and fearless; the lordly spirits who walk erect, ruling, criticising, judging, and pronouncing judgments in His Church and at His altars, on His faith, sacraments, and servants. Verily, "many that are first shall be last."

In like manner, there are those who seem afar off, but are nearest, even already within the threshold of His kingdom; for sinners with compunction are nearer to Him than the righteous without humility. "Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before" Scribes and Pharisees. The world believes none of these things. It knows what penitents once were; for it is keen-eyed and retentive. It remembers their wanderings and scandals; but it has no spiritual discernment to read the conversion of a soul. The world rebukes self-accusers as shameless, unmanly, wanting in self-respect, and believes them still to be what they are now no longer. But there is One who knows all,—at whose feet they daily kneel. He has seen all by His divine intuition. He has

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heard all in His patient ear of mercy. Go, then, to Him continually; never suffering a sin to sink unconfessed into the heart,—for harboured sins soon fester, and one sin "will eat as doth a canker," infecting the whole soul. Fear Him not, for He is pity. Only lay open your grief to Him, and the blood of sprinkling shall come down. He will bind up your oldest and sorest wounds. Believe in your absolution as a point of faith. Draw near to Him, morning and night, especially as you approach the altar, and there, before Him, lift up your eyes to His heavenly throne. Whom do you behold surrounding Him on every side? A great company of saints now,—a little while ago a great company of penitents; humbled and self-accusing here on earth,—now spotless as Himself.

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SERMON IX.

THE ANALOGY OF NATURE.

1 Cor. xv. 35-38.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body."

THIS is St. Paul's answer to objections against the resurrection of the body. The objector took his stand upon supposed impossibilities. "How are the dead raised up?"—as if death were extinction; "and with what body do they come?"—as if corruption were annihilation. St. Paul's answer is drawn, not from faith, but from nature. "Death," he says, "is a condition of life. 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' Death does not extinguish the seed; it must die before it can be quickened. And 'thou sowest

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not that body that shall be, but bare grain.' The change or corruption of the seed is not annihilation, but the germination of a new form, a more perfect structure, the blade, the stalk, and the ear. Nature refutes your fancied impossibility by her perpetual facts. The resurrection is before your eyes. You believe it already. Nature has her resurrection as well as grace; both are kingdoms of God, and His omnipotence is in both alike. There is a relation of virtue and power, as between seed and fruit, so between the body sown and the body that shall be raised from the dead."

Such is St. Paul's argument. He does not prove by miracle; he does not cite revelations; he does not appeal to faith; and that for two reasons: first, he is only answering objections; and next, the very thing to be proved was the fact of a miraculous revelation itself. He therefore says with great energy, "Why object to the resurrection of the dead?—the very world rebukes you. O foolish, the seed of the field dies, that it may rise again."

Now we will consider, not the particular subject of St. Paul's controversy, the resurrection of the body, but the form of his argument, which we are wont to call the analogy of nature. It is of great moment that we should well understand its use; for no argument is so strong within its sphere,

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and none more fatal if pressed too far. Within its legitimate range, it makes nature divine; when pushed beyond, it reduces faith to a natural religion.

Let us see, then, how far it is good, and when it becomes bad. The argument from analogy is good and unanswerable:

1. First, when it is used, as by St. Paul in this place, to refute objections. It is plainly absurd to argue against revelation, or any specific doctrines of revelation, on the ground of difficulties and supposed impossibilities, the like of which may be found already to exist in the acknowledged facts of nature. When we say the *like*, it is plain we mean the like in proportion and relation, not in individual properties or specific kind; for instance, a seed is not like a human body, nor a furrow like a grave; nor an ear of corn like our flesh glorified. But the terms are related in the two processes, and have a proportion each to each: they run in parallel. As the seed is to the ear, so is the corruptible body to the incorruptible; and as the furrow to the wheat, so is the grave to our flesh. Now it is undeniable, that this is an argument which puts unbelievers, if they persist, out of the pale of reason. They are outlawed from revelation and philosophy, from faith and fact. The same argument is good in defence of many other

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doctrines of the Gospel, such as future judgment, reward and punishment, moral probation, and the like. Whatever unbelievers may say, they are already, in the order of nature, subject to the very same laws. Do what they will, go where they may, they cannot escape; nature, as they call it, will deal with them and dispose of them according to the very same laws as revelation. These laws are facts in nature as well as doctrines of the Gospel. All this is solid reasoning, beyond the subtilty of objection to undo. It clears away at a sweep the supposed preliminary objections to this or that doctrine of the faith.

But a still further use may be made of this argument. Hitherto it has been treated by way of refutation only, as by St. Paul in the text, to answer objections; but it may be used to some extent affirmatively also. The correspondence between the facts of nature and the doctrines of the faith forms a strong presumption that both come from one author, — the marks of the same hand are visible in both. We must bear in mind, that in this use of analogy we employ it no further than as raising a presumption. For, in arguing with unbelievers, the very point at issue is, whether the faith be a true revelation or not; that is, whether it come from God. Believers may invert the argument, and say, "He who believes the

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Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the author of nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of nature."[1] But in arguing with unbelievers this is to beg the question. The point to be proved is, that the faith comes from God. If they admitted this, the analogy of nature would prepare them for mysteries which would be difficulties no longer, but facts in the faith, as these visible facts may be called doctrines of the natural world. But this is the point they do not admit. They meet us with a direct contradiction. We cannot, therefore, take it for granted. We must open our way to it; we must clear the path of approach. The hindrances which bar it up are these supposed impossibilities, to which nature offers an analogy, and therefore provides a reply. They are not impossible; for we see that they actually exist. And this point being gained, the tide of the argument turns the other way. What was simple refutation becomes a presumptive proof. We may now say, "You cannot deny these facts in nature: you acknowledge that nature is from God: the faith is so far a counterpart of nature, bears the same features, the tokens of one and the same hand: how can you deny that the faith too is from God?" This is not offered as a positive or con-

[1] Origen, quoted by Bp. Butler, "Analogy," introd. p. 6.

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structive proof. It is a strong presumption, a high probability; but revelation awaits its own proper evidence. It does but reduce the assailant to his defence, and throws the burden upon the objector.

We may go one step further still. The visible coincidence between the facts of nature and the doctrines of faith, so far as we can observe them, make it probable that the same coincidence may exist beyond our range of observation: just as the coincidence of any complex figures, seen in part, leads to a presumption that the correspondence may run throughout. And this, perhaps, was in the thoughts of the son of Sirach when he said, "All things are double one against another, and He hath made nothing imperfect."[1] But it is plain without a word, that such a hypothesis is no more than a presumption, formed beforehand, and without proof or evidence. Of this, however, we may better speak hereafter.

Thus far, then, the argument from analogy is irresistible. It clears away supposed objections by fact; it raises a probability that revelation is, like nature, the work of God; and that the analogy we trace in part, may extend beyond our range of observation. Thus far it invests nature with a divine character, and makes it the basis of the faith. It

[1] Ecclus. xlii. 24.

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consecrates the visible world as a type and sacrament of the unseen; and so throughout holy Scripture we find it regarded. St. Paul convicts the heathen of vincible ignorance; "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."[1] In like manner, again, he spoke at Lystra.[2] And the whole use of natural illustrations in the language of metaphor is founded upon the same implied presumption. But, after all, the sum of the case is this: the argument from analogy, in its refutative form, is absolute: in its constructive it is only a presumption; clearing the way for the positive and proper evidence of the point at issue.

2. And this leads us to notice shortly in what form this analogical way of reasoning is bad and destructive.

Every body will at once, and at first sight, acknowledge, that it would be mere infidelity to take the analogy of nature as the measure or limit of revelation. For this, in fact, has been the normal argument of free-thinkers. In the last century, the phrase 'Christianity as old as the creation'

[1] Rom. i. 19, 20. [2] Acts xiv. 17.

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became an axiom and a watchword. And among rationalists it is a favourite idea, that so much of Christianity as they are pleased to believe resides implicitly in the human consciousness, and has been evolved from it. Now if this form of argument be examined, it will be found ultimately to rest on an abuse of the analogy of nature and revelation. A likeness of observed proportions being pressed beyond its range, leads to an assumed coincidence; as if nature were a counterpart of the faith—a sort of material and visible exhibition upon a lower scale, and with relation to temporal ends, of the same agencies and laws. These supposed counterparts soon run into a supposed identity, and the faith sinks into a mere natural religion; or, to use words which have become technical, supernaturalism merges in naturalism.

We must take care therefore, lest, without intending it, we really lend our help in this direction.

There is also another and a very common misuse of this great form of argument. People who would at once see the manifest falsehood of avowedly using the analogy of nature as the limit of revelation, are often not aware that they effectively do the same thing when they employ it to *prescribe the manner and kind* of the Divine procedure within the precincts of the revelation they receive. This will be better made clear by examples.

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For instance, it is observed that the nature of man is one, and common to the whole race: all partake in it, and all are therefore consubstantial; but this unity is consistent with an all but infinite multitude of persons. This seems to be a direct confirmation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. It need not be said that this analogy, if pressed too far, would establish Tritheism.

Suppose, to escape this, the analogy of the perfect unity of powers in the individual soul be assumed. It then issues in Sabellianism.

The analogy of human paternity and human sonship directly proves the Arian doctrine.

But this will be admitted at once. Let us take other examples.

We find, then, that the race of mankind has no common language, no common polity, no unity of relations either of equality or of government; that families, as they multiply, perpetually subdivide, and nations expand till they cast off colonies and hostile empires; that, in fact, the whole analogy of nature and providence establishes the law of individual and national development—of a radical unity, with no one visible form or organic polity. Therefore the analogy of God's actual dealings is thought to be opposed to the theory of visible unity in a polity of Divine institution, or, in other words, to the visible unity of the Church.

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Again, the testimony of all mankind agrees as to the certainty of evidence based on personal experience, such as eye-witness, and the uncertainty of any thing which seems at variance with the evidence of sense; therefore the holy sacraments are sacred symbols, to be received reverently, but in themselves still continue, to the last, without any change, or supernatural element beyond the sphere of sense.

Or, once more: We find that the inclination of mankind by nature has universally tended to corrupt the truth originally received, and that the clear sight of truth has been restored, from time to time, only by the intelligence of individuals; therefore the traditions of Christendom are human corruptions of a Divine element, and the corrective tests are the critical powers of the individual reason.

And lastly, it may be said: We find that it has pleased God to ordain our probation on laws which often involve many doubtful questions and balanced probabilities as to duty and truth; and so we find also that Christianity is not universal; that its evidences are peculiar both in measure and kind; that they are not the strongest possible even to all those to whom it is actually revealed; that the quantity and quality of evidence are part of our probation, to some men perhaps especially; that,

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as certainty is found nowhere in nature, it is not to be demanded in revelation; that a measure of uncertainty, that is, of probability, is involved in the idea of moral trial, and that the facts of nature shew us on what laws revealed truth is to be sought and held; and that therefore the whole analogy of our condition is opposed to the supposition of an unerring witness preserving and propounding truth by Divine appointment in the Church.

Now, with whatsoever force and seeming probability these propositions may be maintained, they are one and all examples of one and the same fallacy. They not only use the analogy of nature antecedently to the proper proof, so as to prescribe *à priori* the manner in which the Divine revelation has been put and left, but ultimately even against it. In fact, they are but the fine end of naturalism. The principle carried out is "Christianity as old as the creation." The revelation based upon it is only a heap of Christian facts, without unity, coherence, or procession from any supernatural idea.

The force of analogy is here assumed to be positive and constructive, and that too in matters beyond its sphere. It is as if we should argue, that because the earth is a planet, describes an elliptical orbit round the sun, is spherical in form, and revolves on an axis, therefore the other planets, in which all these conditions are equally fulfilled,

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are in all other conditions like the earth; for instance, inhabited and by a fallen race, and endowed with no higher functions or conditions; that, in a word, they are as our earth is, and transcend it in nothing. Now it is scientifically true that this analogy raises a high amount of probability; and until the positive and proper evidence can be brought to shew that it has pleased God to endow other worlds more highly than our own, this analogy is master of the field. It has no antagonist: high probability is, in this case, our highest proof, and, as a presumption, no one can gainsay it. But here is exactly the point where false analogies fail. The planets can put in no proper evidence for themselves, but revelation can and does.

In truth, as has been said by a great master of analogy, we can be no judges of the wisdom of God in the order we find established in the world; and nothing but the knowledge of another world,[1] to which we might compare it, would give us the criteria of such a judgment. We must take it as we find it—a sole and ultimate fact in itself. So with revelation: the nearest analogy we have is that of nature; but nothing can give us either the grounds on which to measure, or the criteria by which to judge it, except another revelation, with which it may be compared. Nature follows

[1] Bp. Butler, Analogy, part ii. ch. ii. § 3.

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by its side a little way, till revelation transcends its sphere: the world is natural; revelation, by its very term, a supernatural world. We must receive it in its own light and upon its own proper proofs. Let us, therefore, turn our thoughts for a while to those proofs, and then conclude.

1. What, then, is this proper evidence on which revelation, or, as we shall better say henceforth, the Church and the Faith, repose? Plainly, upon no presumptions or probabilities deduced before the fact, that is, upon no *à priori* reasoning. We are not able to say before the fact whether any revelation shall be given or not; or, if given, to what extent, to what end, on what evidence, or how secured, and the like. In this, nature is silent as death. Analogies have no existence. All our proofs are after the event. The fact attests itself, and reveals its own outline, character, and conditions. In the beginning, God revealed Himself to the patriarchs by visions and tokens of His Divine presence. That was their revelation and its evidences. It needed no analogies, and would accept of none. Abraham at Mamre, Jacob at Bethel, Moses in Horeb, Israel in the wilderness, Aaron in the tabernacle, Joshua by Jericho, Gideon at the oak in Ophrah, all the hierarchy of Israel, the seers and the prophets, and the whole family of the chosen tribes, — what proofs, what

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evidences, what analogies had they, or needed they, to prove that God was with them as their Light and their Sanctifier?

And just so has it been with the Church of Christ. The Word was made flesh; the elect saw Him in the temple; He was manifested at His baptism; He chose out, first twelve to be with Him, and then seventy; He wrought miracles, taught, suffered, rose again, went up into heaven, shed abroad the Holy Ghost, knit together His mystical Body, gave life to it by His own presence in the Holy Spirit. What analogies of nature cast so much as a shadow of these things? so much as a faint probability of the miraculous conception, the incarnation of the Eternal Son, the descent, presence, inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Plainly the whole argument from analogy is but as a sign "for them that believe not." It is for those that are without. It is not the children's bread, nor has it any place before the Shechinah. The supernatural inspiration of the Church is a perpetual illumination above the laws of nature. Its conditions, limits, and modes of operation are all its own. The fact of Christendom, the miracle of the visible Church, the supernatural traditions of the heavenly kingdom,—these are the proper evidences to those that are within the fold of Christ. These, and these only, reveal the laws and the

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manner of God's dealing with us through His incarnate Son. Within the sphere of a miracle as wide as the world, to be told of natural laws ought in itself to be warning enough—"Take these things hence." Is there any part of the new creation that is not supernatural? Is not even its earthly basis at once above nature by the gift of regeneration?

Because our human personality divides the unity of substance, must, therefore, the divine? Because our individuality admits of no more than one personal subsistence, can there be no distinction of Persons in the Godhead? Because among men the father is before the son, cannot the everlasting Son be co-eternal with the Father? Because the old creation is fallen and divided, may not the new have an unity derived from heaven? Because sense rules in the world, may there not be sacraments in the Church? Because human traditions grow corrupt, may not divine traditions be kept pure? Because keen intellects rule among human reasoners, are they to be instructors of the Saints? Because natural truth is an uncertain light, may not the light of Christ be sustained by Himself infallible and clear? Surely all this is nothing less than to take nature without revelation as the measure and limit of Christ's presence and office in the Church. What is the Church of

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Christ in its first idea, but a supernatural economy, an order above nature; a creation which is in itself a miracle, in which the course of its proper nature is miraculous? By the very hypothesis, the analogies of this fallen world are excluded. And yet, when I say excluded, I do not say violated or transgressed. They are satisfied in full; they are satisfied to exhaustion, and beyond; as fully as the laws of our humanity were fulfilled in the person of our Lord, which was also divine, and in His unearthly perfection after He rose from the dead. While He fulfilled, He transcended all our conditions. "It is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." He was all He had been, and more besides: all that He had put off was infirmity. So, in its measure, with the Church. It complies with all the true and divine analogies of nature; it exhausts, and goes beyond them all. Nature has laws of probation, reward, punishment, moral discipline, and the like; so had the law of Moses; but our Lord said, "I am come, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." Nature was exalted into the elder covenant, and the law ascended into the Gospel: it went up "from strength to strength," "from glory to glory." We are under an economy above nature, miraculous and heavenly. The idea and principles, the laws, limits, and con-

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ditions of the kingdom of Christ in the revelation and perpetuity of truth, in the effusion and distribution of grace, are as far above the reach of natural analogies as heaven is above earth. In what do they begin, in what are they continued, but in a series of supernatural facts, in original revelations, in spiritual consciousness, in the words of inspired Scripture, in apostolical traditions, in the testimony of the Church, in the definitions of Councils, in the collective discernment of men sanctified by the Spirit of God? In every one of these there is an element of which nature has no counterpart or analogy. It is only after all these that we come to the region of this world; to the judgments of philosophers, the labours of critics, the deductions of reasoning, and the testimony of uninspired histories. Such, then, is the proper and positive evidence on which the faith is built.

2. And lastly, let us consider, What is the proper faculty or instrument by which the truth is to be apprehended? The whole word of God answers at once, By faith. Let us only remember how the revelation of God was given. Was it discovered by investigation, or was it simply received from heaven? There is no third way to arrive at the original truth: it is either by discovery or by reception; either, that is, by reasoning or by faith. How, then, was it given? To

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the prophets, by the inspiration of God; to the Apostles, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, by the presence and guidance of Christ. And that gift which was received by faith has been, by the Spirit of Christ, perpetuated through faith. It was not first *given*, then left to be *discovered;* first consigned to faith, then to be proved by reason. It brought its own proof: the inspiration of Apostles became illumination in the Church. The illumination of the Holy Ghost is as perpetual as His presence. His office is, as His presence, "for ever;" that is, unto the end of the world. Did any Christian ever doubt that both "grace and truth," which came by Jesus Christ, are necessary for our salvation? And has any one ever imagined that the Holy Spirit has ceased to sanctify Christ's body? Did He sanctify the Apostles and first believers, and then leave the family of Christ, for all ages, to work out their salvation by moral habits and the force of nature? And if this be as impious as incredible, does He continue to sanctify, but not to illuminate? Does His presence sustain the stream of grace, and not sustain the stream of truth? If the Church is not thrown upon its mere moral powers for sanctity, is it thrown upon its mere intellectual powers for doctrine? Surely the traditions of grace and the traditions of truth are both sustained by the same

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perpetua and infallible presence. Is it possible to believe that the supernatural illumination of the Spirit was so given as to rest upon no higher base than reason, discovery, criticism, and analogies of nature? "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"[1] What is moral evidence, of which so much is said? It is the highest probability which can be attained in matters where there is no manifest certainty in the object, and no higher light than the light of nature in the subject. Suppose the natural light of the individual mind to be aided in some general way by grace: even then, at the highest, moral evidence is only probable; that is, uncertain both in the subject and in the object. Is it possible to believe that this scheme of probabilities (that is, of uncertainty) in doctrine, and imperfection (that is, of doubt) in evidence, is a part of the probation of the regenerate within the revelation of the faith? Because to unbelievers the nature and quality of the proof is a trial of faith, as the mission of our Lord was to the Jews, are we to suppose that probable evidence was a part of the trial of the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Ghost? And if not of the Apostles, was it to those who heard them? For instance, is it a part of the trial of the Church to hold

[1] Gal. iii. 3.

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the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the holy Sacraments, the Resurrection, upon probable evidence? Surely we are mistaking the very meaning of faith. Faith means trust in a divine authority. The trust we repose in human authority and reasoning may be called faith by an analogy which invests it with a dignity above its own: it is a human and earthly type of a divine gift: just as we speak of natural *religion*, or the *revelations* of nature. But faith is an infused grace of God, by which the soul casts its whole confidence upon the authority of God. The infallibility of God is the foundation of that trust. The infallibility of the Church is made up of these two elements; perfect certainty in the object revealed, and spiritual illumination in the subject which perceives it, that is, the Church itself. Shake this foundation, and faith becomes uncertainty; and what is uncertainty, as a rule of life or as a principle of action? the best, indeed, that nature can give in most things, but the least truth in the kingdom of God is greater than it. What gives to faith its confidence of trust, its enduring strength in action, its intense insight in contemplation? Certainty founded on revelation. And what is the very first idea of revelation but a clear and infallible knowledge of the truth given direct from God?

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Now it is no answer to this to ask, But how many attain to such a certainty? This is only the objection urged against the Gospel by free-thinkers from without the Church, namely, its want of universality. It is no objection against either the universality of redemption, or the infallibility of the Church. What has been said amounts to this: that the doctrines of the faith, fully and clearly revealed by inspiration in the beginning, were fully and clearly apprehended by the Church; that the original inspiration has descended in a perpetual illumination; that this divine gift, as it was, at the first, not discovered but received, so it has been, not critically proved, from age to age, by intellect, not gathered by inductions or by the instruments of moral reasoning, but preserved and handed on by faith; that the office of reason is, not to discover and attain, but to illustrate, demonstrate, and expound; that the perpetual preservation of truth is a part of the divine office of the Holy Ghost, ever present in the mystical body of Christ; and that the presence of an infallible Teacher is as necessary to the infirmities of the human reason, as the presence of an omnipotent Comforter is necessary to the infirmities of the human will; that both the will and the reason, without such a presence, omnipotent and infallible, would be in bondage to evil and to falsehood.

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This miraculous and supernatural gift was promised through the prophets. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon them, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."[1]

And this promise was renewed and fulfilled by the Word made flesh. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."[2] "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself: but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come."[3] "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."[4] "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him."[5] "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[6]

[1] Isaiah lix. 21.
[2] St. John xiv. 26.
[3] St. John xvi. 13.
[4] 1 St. John ii. 20.
[5] 1 St. John ii. 27.
[6] St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

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I have dwelt the longer upon this particular example, because it may be taken as the most exalted form in which the revelation of God transcends the presumptions and analogies of nature. Before it was revealed, how unimaginable was the incarnation of the Son of God, the descent and perpetual indwelling of the Holy Ghost! how exuberant of supernatural mysteries, how fruitful in Divine ministries of grace! Since the fall, there had been one heavy downward tide bearing mankind away from God: perpetuity, steadfastness, growth of sanctity, except in scattered saints, was nowhere seen. Even the elder Church was but a shadow of good things to come, though, through all its visible declensions, it preserved its elect, and the promise of Messiah. "As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."[1] And this prophecy, though the teil tree and the oak are types and illustrations, was fulfilled by a divine person and a divine production above the analogies of nature; by the mystical unity of Christ and the Church.

Let us, then, while we trace the unity and harmony of all God's works, both in nature and in grace, beware how we limit the manifold fulness of the Divine procedure. All the creation of God

[1] Isaiah vi. 13.

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reveals itself upon an ascending scale, a mystical ladder, the foot of which rests on this lower earth; but as we climb upward, new and more perfect ministries, laws of a heavenlier tenor, begin to move and reign; as subjects of the city of God, we pass under conditions of probation, guidance, light, grace, and sustenance, of which nature gives the prelude and the hope, but the realities are transcendent and eternal.

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SERMON X.

THE NEW CREATION.

REV. iii. 14.

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

BY these divine titles our Lord made Himself known to the Church of Laodicea. They have each one of them a deep and ineffable meaning, far beyond the reach of our intelligence. He is the eternal, self-affirming, self-attesting Truth; the changeless revelation of the unchangeable wisdom; the fulness of the promises; "the beginning," and first producing cause, "of the creation of God."

It is of this last title we have now to speak. Let us consider, therefore, why He is so called.

And first, the Son of God is so called because He was Himself the creator of all worlds.

In the book of Proverbs we read of the Word or Wisdom of the Father: "The Lord possessed

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me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."[1] Again, in the book of Psalms: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."[2] The beloved disciple writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..... All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."[3] And St. Paul writes: "Who is the image of the in-

[1] Prov. viii. 22-30.
[2] Ps. xxxii. 6.
[3] St. John i. 1, 3.

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visible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."[1] And again: "His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."[2] And so the Church confesses in the Nicene creed, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," "by whom all things were made."

From these words we learn that the creator of the world is the everlasting Son of God. The Word of God is He by whom "He spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast." He said, "Let there be light: and there was light." That same almighty and eternal Word is not a mere effluence, or emanation, or radiance of the Father, but a divine Person, consubstantial, distinct, but undivided,—the Power of creation, as voice is the power of speech,—true, living, almighty. Thus He was the beginning, the first moving cause, making that to be which was not, shaping and moulding it after the forms of His own eternal wisdom; ordering, harmonising, uniting all things; filling, quickening, upholding

[1] Col. i. 15-17. [2] Heb. i. 2.

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all things. All creation was a visible revealing of the divine Word. He was in all things, clothing Himself with His creatures; imaging Himself forth in wisdom, goodness, and power. All orders of being, visible and invisible, had their life in Him who was "the Life," the sustaining bond of their life and unity. This is one, and the first, sense of this divine title.

2. Again, He is the beginning of the creation of God, as the first cause or principle of its restoration. After the world had fallen from Him, and was at war with Him, the same power of endless life, out of which in the beginning they first arose into being, became a power of healing and restoration. There is a mysterious law which pervades the creatures of this fallen world, healing over and smoothing out even the scars of their wounds. So is He in the creation of God. He is the power of health and restoration, renewing all things. Before the fall of man, this mystery of restoration was conceived in heaven, though the voice was not heard for long ages upon earth: "Behold, I make all things new." The beginning of the new creation was even then at work. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning." Time is not, with Him. Though His divine purposes are unfolded and fulfilled in time, with Him they are already perfect in order

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and fulness. In the first four thousand years of the world the Son of God was preparing all things to unfold the great mystery of the new creation. He spake with man by the ministry of angels, and intermingled with the earthly life of His chosen people. He spake with Abraham when the burning lamp passed between the sacrifices, and with Moses at the unconsuming bush in Horeb; He journeyed in the midst of Israel in the wilderness; He put His Spirit on prophets and seers, until the fulness of time came, that the Word should be made flesh and dwell among us, and that men should behold His glory. This was the first act of the new creation. By the mystery of the Incarnation it began to be, and the Word made flesh is "the Beginning."

As the first Adam, who was by creation the son of God, was made of the virgin earth, so the second Adam, the only-begotten Son of the Father, was made man of a virgin mother. The first miraculous birth of the dust of the earth was a shadow of the second miraculous birth of the substance of the woman. Our manhood, which in the fall of the first man was marred and sullied, He took in all its sinless infirmities in will, conscience, and affections; and He bare it in all its measures and ages, of childhood, youth, and manhood. He hallowed it, and filled it with the Divine

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presence, and reconsecrated it to God. In it He died, and laid it in the rock, and bare it through the valley of the shadow of death; raised it from the dead; exalted it above the conditions of matter; of a natural body, made it to be a spiritual body; carried it upward to the holiest of all, and arrayed it in glory at the right hand of God. Such is the mystery of the Incarnation, as now perfected in the kingdom of heaven. It is the restoration of our manhood to God in the Person of Jesus Christ. But as the first creation was not a single and final, but a sustained and continuous act, so also is the second. As in the first was contained the multiplication and increase of all germs of nature and the perpetual preservation of the whole order of life, so in the new, which is the mystical body of the Son, He began a new family of man upon the earth.

In the mystery of the Incarnation is contained, therefore, the mystery of our renewal, in body, soul, and spirit, to the image of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the principle and power, and, as it were, the root of the new creation. We are so united to His incarnate nature, as to be incorporated and summed up in Him: we are made one with Him, as by our natural lineage we are one with the first Adam, the father of all flesh. When He ascended up on high, the virtues of His glorified

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manhood were shed abroad upon His Church. Through His holy Sacraments began a new line of spiritual generation. We are new-born, or regenerated. We were made partakers of that manhood which is sinless, immortal; we are incorporated in that new creation, of which the second Adam is the head, the source, and the beginning. Therefore the Apostle calls the font of baptism "the laver of regeneration." We can be born into this fallen world but once; and into the new world, which is the Church, but once. As, then, there is no second birth in nature, so no second regeneration. There is but "one baptism for the remission of sins." And as our birth is an isolated event, shut up within the narrow boundaries of the moment in which we enter into this fallen world; and therefore our after existence is not still called birth, but life, or living;—so is our new birth perfected at the font; and therefore our after life of faith is not called regeneration, as if spiritual birth were a continuous fact, as if we could be always entering for the first time into the new creation of God, but our renewal. We are thenceforward under the continual transforming and restoring power of Him who in Himself hath made all things new. The work of our renewal, indeed, is not perfected in regeneration, but only begun. All our life long we must grow into

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the perfection and ripeness of the new manhood we have received from Christ. Our renewal shall never be perfect until we shall be made like Him, in that day when "we shall see Him as He is."

We must pass to Him by the gate of death; for the death of the body is a witness of God's justice and of our sin. Our body of earth is a partaker of the new creation, but its time is not yet. It must die, turn into dust, be changed, and raised again. This is a great and wonderful mystery of God's love and of our humiliation. But death is no longer an enemy; it is a minister of the resurrection. As the mystery of the Incarnation was not complete till Christ rose from the grave, and the new man, the first-born of the dead, came forth into the world, having destroyed death for ever, so neither shall our renewal be fulfilled until the morning of the resurrection. Then the mystery of baptism shall be completed. What was begun in the soul shall be made perfect also in the body. The whole outline of the restoration shadowed forth in that holy sacrament shall be fulfilled. The whole family of God shall be renewed, every one in the perfect likeness of the Son of God; and the Word or Wisdom of the Father shall manifest Himself afresh through a new creation. "The Beginning" shall once more reveal Himself in the unity and the perfection of a world, not

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restored only, but raised to more than its original perfection: to sin and die no more, but blissful and eternal in Him who is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."[1]

If this divine title of our Lord had been more patiently and devoutly considered, many of the deepest and sorest wounds suffered by His body on earth, and at the hands of His own professed servants, would have been turned aside.

1. We have here seen two great spiritual facts: the first, that the Word, who is by eternal generation of one substance with the Father, by the mystery of the Incarnation became of one substance with us. Unity of substance does not mean unity of persons, as the Socinians blindly say. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are in substance one, but in person distinct. Their personal distinctions are incommunicable; so that the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. The word 'substance' expresses their common nature, excluding all personal proprieties, as paternity, filiation, and procession, by which each Person is distinct. And the word 'consubstantial' guards the distinctness of personality, while it affirms the unity of Godhead. So, to pass from the infinite to the finite, Christ took of

[1] Rev. xxi. 6.

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the substance of the blessed Virgin. He thereby united Himself to the line of which Adam is the first father. The very substance originally created of the dust, multiplied throughout mankind, and descending in the generations of four thousand years, was taken by the Son of God in the womb of His Blessed Mother. His union with us is a consubstantial union. His substance as Man, and our substance, are one and the same. Yet His Person is not our person: unity of substance does not in the finite, any more than in the infinite, carry with it unity of person. Our personal distinction and entity is incommunicable. Every living man is as personally distinct as every star of light. The unity of brightness does not confound the distinctness of their several existence. So far we may use this parallel, but no farther; for with us personality involves also distinction of will, power, and the like; but in God all these are one. Here, then, we see one great spiritual fact, one great law and mystery, that between God and man there is a person who is both Man and God; consubstantial with the Creator and the creature, the finite and the infinite; that by one consubstantial unity He is God, by the other, Man.

There have been from the beginning teachers and sects who have endeavoured to destroy the faith of the Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation,

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as the Gnostics, Docetæ, Arians, Nestorians, and, of later times, the Socinians. It is never to be forgotten, that all these sects have alike adopted one principle in the interpretation of holy Scripture. They have treated its language as metaphorical and figurative: they have explained it as a symbolical expression of relations and affinities. For instance, the unity of the Father and the Son is not, according to them, in substance, but in volition and in love: the Word and the Spirit were impersonal attributes, personated only in figure, and the like. Now, against this the Catholic Church has always held one uniform doctrine in one uniform language, namely, that all these divine mysteries are real, spiritual, and substantial; and that spirit is substance and reality.

2. The other great fact issuing from the last is, that as by this substantial unity and personal distinctness the Son lives by the Father; so we, distinct in person, but partaking of His substance, live by the Son. He Himself hath said it. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."[1] And again: "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."[2] As the unity of the Father and the Son is not a figure or metaphor, an external

[1] St. John v. 26. [2] St. John vi. 57.

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relation or affinity, but a real, spiritual unity of substance; so our union with the Word made flesh is not figurative or metaphorical, by affinity and relation of will, or love only, but in substance, spirit, and reality. As the Son partakes of the Godhead of the Father, so we partake of the manhood of the Son: as He lives by the Father, we live by Him. Surely this great spiritual fact is doubted by no one who does not also deny the truth of the Incarnation, or the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity. How can there be any living union which is not real? or real union which is not substantial? "God is a spirit." Branches do not derive their life by a figurative engrafting, neither is the union of the trunk and the root a metaphor. The Incarnation is a real and substantial partaking of our manhood; and our union with Christ is a real, substantial partaking of His. He partook of ours by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and we of His by the power of the same Spirit. The miraculous Agent in the Incarnation and in the holy Sacraments is the same third Person of the ever-blessed Three, uniting first the divine nature to ours in the person of the Son, and now our fallen nature to Him as "the beginning of the" new "creation of God."

If this had been ever borne in mind, the Church would have been spared many a rent, and

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love and truth many a wound. For how, then, could true believers treat the holy Sacraments as metaphors and figures? How could any confound the nature of substance with the dimensions of a person; or misconceive the blessed truth of the real presence of Christ, as God and Man, in the holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood? How could notions of quantity, locality, circumscription, division, and the like, find a place in the contemplations, or even in the controversies, of Christians? Alas, we have but ill learned the mystery of the Incarnation, so to wander from the mysteries of the Spirit. We are united, indeed, to Him as to a Person, but our union with Him is by participation of His substance. "As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." Let us, then, with veneration and veiled faces adore His presence. Let us believe His very words when He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "I am the Bread of life." "This is My body." "This is My blood." "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him." These are not metaphors nor figures. God forbid. Neither are they to be carnally understood. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh" (that is, apart from the Spirit, not "*My* flesh, which is meat indeed")

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"profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you" are substance and reality; "they are spirit, and they are life." What is an unsubstantial spirit but no spirit? an unsubstantial life but no life at all? or an unsubstantial presence but an unreal presence—a very and true absence? What is an unsubstantial regeneration but a word, a figure, and an empty sound?—a worthy doctrine only for those who believe in an unsubstantial incarnation, a figurative resurrection, a metaphorical creation. O the dreaming shallowness of the reason of man! O the depth both of the power and of the spirit of God! Let us hold fast what we have, that no man take our crown. The law had "a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." We have entered into the order of the spiritual world, where shadows are not; where all things are real and eternal. Let us trust in Him who is "the Amen," the very and true Life, the giver of life, the multiplier of all creatures, the Maker and the Healer of the substance of our manhood, first in Himself, and then in us who by faith are His.

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SERMON XI.

THE BODY OF CHRIST.

HEB. X. 5.

"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me."

THE parable of the True Vine sets before us the great spiritual mystery of which these words, spoken by the Messiah in prophecy, plant as it were the root. In that parable we see the perfect outline of the Incarnation, or Christ mystical in all fulness: the root, the stem, the branches, the stately perfection and the exuberant fruit of the elect vine. It describes by anticipation the life, growth, and fruitage of the Church, and reveals also the source and channels through which the quickening life passes into all its structure and farthest sprays.

These words of the Psalmist, quoted by St.

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Paul, are therefore a prophecy of the Incarnation. In the fortieth Psalm, as it stands in the Hebrew, the words here quoted by St. Paul run, "But mine ear hast Thou opened;" that is, as the ear of a servant was pierced by his master, in token of perpetual service. But the Septuagint, which St. Paul here follows, reads, "A body hast Thou prepared me," or "fitted to me." These two readings are one in substance. The form of a servant which He took upon Him was our humanity; and the boring of the ear is a still more vivid prophecy of the Incarnation of the Word made flesh, who became "obedient unto death."

This prophecy, then, plainly declares that the everlasting Son, who created the world, and ministered in divers appearances to the saints of God, would, in fulness of time, of His own free and loving will, humble Himself still more deeply, and take upon Him the body of our flesh. God had prepared for Him in His foreknowledge, in love and wisdom, by His election of grace, a body of the substance of a virgin, chosen to bear the Son of God; and this predestination has in it a wonderful depth of mystery, an abundant and eternal fruitfulness. May He who foretold His own humiliation for us, lead us by His Spirit, so far as is for our good, into the knowledge of this stupendous work of love and power. Let us, then, see

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what is this "body" which was prepared for Him of God.

1. First, it plainly means the natural body, which He took of the substance of the Blessed Virgin His mother. This was a very and true body of flesh, even as our own. And here let us observe, that as, in speaking of men, the word of God uses to speak of our noblest part, and puts the soul for our whole nature; so in speaking of the humiliation of God, as if more openly to express His abasement, it describes His whole manhood by its lowest part: "A body hast Thou prepared Me." We must not, however, fall into the Apollinarian or Eutychian errors, and imagine that the Word took only a body of flesh and blood, as if the divine nature were the quickening mind and soul; or that the spiritual nature of man was absorbed in the divine. In the mystery of the divine Incarnation two whole and perfect natures were united in one person; the Godhead, with all attributes and perfections, infinite and eternal,—the manhood, with all its properties and powers of body, soul, and spirit. "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." All that makes up the natural perfection of man as a moral and reasonable intelligence, together with a passible and mortal body, He assumed into the unity of His person. It is only

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by bearing the whole truth in mind that holy Scripture can be rightly understood. This being the mystery of the Incarnation, we should be prepared to find two distinct currents of language, one relating to the divine and infinite, the other to the human and finite nature. And these, so far from being contradictions to be explained away, are confirmations of the mystery, which rigidly demands a twofold language. We read, for instance, of the Son, "All things were made by Him;"[1] and again, "He was crucified through weakness."[2] How can these be understood of the same person? How could the Creator be crucified, or one that was crucified create all things? At one time we read that He is in heaven,[3] one with the Father;[4] in the Father, and the Father in Him;[5] at another, that He increased in wisdom and stature,[6] was subject to His parents,[7] was weary,[8] and was less than the Father.[9] These things, which seem to cross each other, do indeed attest the union of two natures in one person. If we did not read them, heresy would have somewhat to say; because we do read them, it has only somewhat to pervert. But neither do the divine attributes absorb the human infirmities, nor do the human properties

[1] St. John i. 3. [4] St. John x. 30. [7] St. Luke ii. 51.
[2] 2 Cor. xiii. 4. [5] Ibid. xiv. 10. [8] St. John iv. 6.
[3] St. John iii. 13. [6] St. Luke ii. 52. [9] Ibid. xiv. 20.

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lessen the divine; forasmuch as both so unite in Him, that neither are the proper natures of God and man confounded, nor the unity of the person destroyed.[1] This, then, is the meaning of the prophecy: "Thou hast ordained for Me the perfect nature of manhood, in which to sanctify humanity, to fulfil Thy will, O God, and to die for the sin of the world: 'a body hast Thou prepared Me.'" In this nature He conversed for three and thirty years among us, eating the fruits of the earth, taking rest in sleep, subject to all the laws of our earthly state: only thrice in His mortal life, so far as we read, the properties of our nature were for a while suspended; once when He fasted forty days, again when He walked upon the water, and a third time when He was transfigured in the mountain. But His very and true natural body was, like ours, subject to all infirmities, visible, circumscribed, and local; and of this the unbelief of the people of Capernaum is witness. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"[2] They saw with their eyes a body like their own, subject to all the same conditions; and, according to those conditions, visible and natural, they misunderstood His divine and supernatural promise. Wherefore He said, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where

[1] S. Leo, Ep. cxxxiv. ad Leon. Aug.

[2] St. John vi. 52.

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He was before?"[1] As if He had said, "Can flesh and blood, then, ascend up into heaven? If ye see this, will ye believe that 'My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed?' that there are with God powers and virtues, gifts and mysteries, of which ye know not? 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth.' The Spirit is not come, as yet: 'the flesh,' mortal, visible, and local, as ye see it, 'profiteth nothing.'"[2] And of this it would seem that He gave, while yet on earth, a type and shadow. After He had suffered in the flesh, and had given His mortal body to be broken upon the cross, He rose again from the dead; no more under the conditions of flesh and blood, though still flesh and blood. He appeared to them "in another form;"[3] He passed the closed doors; He vanished out of their sight, and at the last ascended into heaven; where now, in the local presence of His natural body, visible to heavenly hosts, He sits exalted at the right hand of God.

2. There is yet another mystery contained by virtue and force in this same prophecy. As there was a natural, so there is a supernatural presence of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. He said, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I

[1] St. John vi. 62.

[2] Ibid. 63. See S. Aug. in Joan. Tractat. xxvii. 5.

[3] St. Mark xvi. 12.

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will give for the life of the world." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you; .... for My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." We have already seen how, when the people of Capernaum understood these words in a gross and fleshly sense, as if, in St. Augustine's words, "our Lord was about to divide and give to them a portion of His body"[1] as then visible before them, He, still affirming the reality of the mystery, raised their thoughts to a supernatural manner of fulfilment. And when at the last supper He gave this great Sacrament to His Apostles, He said openly, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood."[2] Upon these words of power St. Paul speaks with the plainness of our Lord Himself: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion"—that is, the partaking—"of the body of Christ?"[3] It is not for us to attempt to explain the secrets of this mystery. Who can tell how the light was created, or how the earth and the world were made; by what change flesh and blood were fashioned of the dust, and woman

[1] S. Aug. Enarr. in Ps. xcviii. 8, tom. iv. p. 1065.

[2] St. Matt. xxvi. 26, 28. [3] 1 Cor. x. 16.

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from the side of Adam? Who can expound the productive power of the first created root, bearing seed in itself; or trace the lineal descent of substance in the corn and the olive, or in the family of man? Who can reveal the manner of the resurrection of the body, or the mystery of the Incarnation? Then here let us stay our thoughts. In the sphere of sense all is unchanged, and sense is absolute; in the sphere of faith all objects are divine, and His word is sure. What He has said, that He will give, in spirit, substance, and reality. Only let us keep aloof from vain questions of false science and sensual logic. The mystery of the Real Presence is not within the order of nature, nor to be either explained or limited by natural conditions. Nature is fallen and dead. It fell and died in Adam, but is quickened from above in Christ. What place have the laws of nature in mysteries which issue from the miraculous conception of a virgin, from an Incarnation of God? Oh, foolish and faithless that we are! foolish in philosophy, and faithless as members of a divine Head. In our baptism we received "that which by nature we could not have;" we were taken up out of the conditions of nature into a supernatural order: and yet when, in full Christian maturity, we are admitted to the altar, we would fain fall back again into "the beggarly

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elements" of this sensual world. Is it not enough for us to know that He who took our manhood, and, in the personal attributes of our nature, is at the right hand of God, is present in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood? It is enough for us to know, that as truly as the life and substance of the first creation are sustained and perpetuated until now, so in the second, which is the mystical Vine, He is root and trunk, branch and fruit; wholly in us, and we in Him.[1] The mysteries of the faith are believed unto salvation, but are analysed with neither blessing nor reward.

3. There is, moreover, yet another and a wider mystery springing up out of the last. The natural body of our Lord Jesus Christ is, as it were, the root out of which, by the power of the Holy Ghost, His mystical body is produced. And therefore He seems to take this title, "I am the root and the offspring of David;"[2] the offspring according to the descent of the first creation, the root as the beginning of the new.

[1] "Non solo sacramento sed re ipsa manducaverunt corpus Christi, *in ipso ejus corpore* constituti, de quo dicit Apostolus, unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus."—*S. Aug. de Civ. Dei*, lib. xxi. c. 20.

"Non enim Christus in capite et non in corpore, sed Christus totus in capite et in corpore."—*S. Aug. Tract. in Joan.* xxviii.

[2] Rev. xxii. 16.

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This great work of the regeneration He began to fulfil when, at His descent into hell, He gathered to Himself the saints who of old were sanctified through the hope of His coming. In what way His saints from the beginning were made partakers of the Divine nature, which to us is given through the Incarnation of His Son, God has not as yet revealed. In what way the power of a holy resurrection wrought in their mortal bodies unknown even to themselves, we know as little as they. But we know that they of old could say, "In my flesh I shall see God;"[1] and "my flesh also shall rest in hope."[2] In their souls they were made members of the mystical body by "the spirit of Christ which was in them."[3] At His descent into the grave they at last beheld their glorious Head revealed, and were united to Him by the presence of the Incarnation. They were engrafted into the stock of the Word made flesh. And though "they without us" could not, when on earth, "be made perfect," yet at His descent unto them, they "came behind in no gift," but were made equal to the saints of the kingdom. Then began the growth and expansion of the mystical vine. Upon this unity of patriarchs, prophets, and saints of old, were engrafted apostles and evangelists, and all the family of the regeneration.

[1] Job xix. 26. [2] Ps. xvi. 9. [3] 1 St. Peter i. 11.

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When the natural body of our Lord had been veiled from the eyes of flesh, a new object arose before the sight of men. Then was manifested upon earth His mystical body, which is the Church. St. Paul writes to the Church in Corinth, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." He here even calls the whole mystical body by the personal name of its Head: He calls it "Christ." "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body."[1] God "gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."[2] "From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."[3] Again, He is "the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."[4] The Church, then, is called His body, because He partook of our flesh and blood, and became Head of the Church; and the Church again, by the Holy

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 27, 12, 13.
[2] Eph. i. 22, 23.
[3] Ephes. iv. 16.
[4] Col. ii. 19.

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Spirit through faith, is made partaker of Him. Therefore St. Paul says, we are "of His flesh and of His bones."[1] In one sense the Church is called the body of Christ, by metaphor and analogy to the members and unity of a natural body: in another sense mystically, because of its true and vital union with Him.

The mystical body of Christ, then, is the whole fellowship of all who are united to Him by the Spirit, whether they be at rest in the world unseen, or here in warfare still on earth; differing only in this, that all His members who have been gathered out of this world are secure for ever; but in this world, they who are still in trial may yet be "taken away," and, as the fruitless and withered branch, "cast forth"[2] for the burning. It is remarkable how this figure, which expresses the intense inwardness and spirituality of the body of Christ, expresses equally its visible unity and organisation. It is as visible, sensible, and local as was the natural body of Christ Himself. In all the world it is visibly manifest as the presence of its unseen Head. It speaks, witnesses, acts, binds and looses in His name, and as Himself. And so in all lands, and through all ages, since He went up into heaven, His mystical body, inspired and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, has filled His place

[1] Ephes. v. 30. [2] St. John xv. 6.

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on earth. The mustard seed has become a great tree, the stone a great mountain; the vine has "sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river."[1] The Body which, in its natural and local condition, was enclosed in an upper chamber, or wound in grave-clothes, has multiplied its life and substance as the first Adam in the family of mankind, and spread itself throughout the generations of God's elect.

Such is the mystical body of Christ.

Are there, then, three bodies of Christ? God forbid: but one only; one in nature, truth, and glory. But there are three manners, three miracles of divine omnipotence, by which that one body has been and is present; the first, as mortal and natural; the second, supernatural, real, and substantial; the third, mystical by our incorporation. The presence is one, the manner threefold; the substance one in all three: all three one in Him; whether He be in the holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood, or in His mystical members, which together make His Church, it is He who, of the substance of the Blessed Virgin, took our nature, was born and crucified, rose and ascended into heaven. Other body than this was not prepared of His Father, and other than this we know of none.

[1] Ps. lxxx. 11.

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Surely these great realities ought to teach us many high and practical truths.

1. As, for instance, with how much of loving reverence we ought to regard every baptised person. He is "a member of Christ;" what more can be spoken or conceived? He is united by the Spirit of Christ to the mystical body, of which the Word made flesh is the supernatural Head. He has in him a life and an element which is above this world; even "the powers of the world to come."[1] St. Peter, by the inspiration of God, declares that we are made "partakers of the divine nature."[2] What does this mean? It does not mean that we are made partakers of the incommunicable Godhead, but that we are made partakers of the manhood of the incarnate Word. It is our nature made divine. We partake of Him: of His very flesh, of His mind, of His will, and of His spirit. He dwells in us according as the capacity of man can receive the indwelling of the incarnate God.[3] This is salvation and the holiness of saints; the mind of Christ infused and reigning, kindling the will with all its affections, quickening the whole spiritual life with the fire of divine

[1] Heb. vi. 5.

[2] 2 St. Peter i. 4.

[3] S. Athan. contra Arian. Orat. i. 16 et 38. *αὐτὸς νἱοποίησεν ἡμᾶς τῷ Πατρὶ, καὶ ἐθεοποίησε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γενόμενος αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος.* also Orat. iii. 25.

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love, with the power of obedience and patience, of sanctity and the cross. In every regenerate soul this exists in germ and virtue. When it is unfolded, we see the imitation, the mystical presence of Christ. Who can describe the communion of saints, or even the mind of one saint? None but saints alone. It is a wonderful and incomprehensible depth of love and power. We can but humble ourselves in our own dust, and be silent.

This is the divine reality which has restored to the world two great laws of love, the unity and the equality of man. All the members of Christ are one in Him, and equal because He is in all. The highest and most endowed is but as the poorest and the lowest. Christ's kingdom is full of heavenly paradoxes. All are rich, and all are poor: all are equal, and all are "subject one to another:"[1] the wise are foolish, and fools are wise; the rich are least, and the poor greatest; the last first, and the first last. What a mystery of peace and bliss! How does this harmonise all sharp worldly contrasts, all abrupt and unequal lots, with the soft light of a divine unity. Even the poor working man, with his hard palms, sits at the marriage-supper with "the king and princes;" it may be sits higher than his earthly lord. With what gentleness, reverence, humble and loving dis-

[1] 1 St. Peter v. 5.

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tance ought we to converse together. How sinful it is to scorn, or to ridicule, a member of Christ's body! In the least we despise the Word made flesh. How would this habitual memory refine, purify, and elevate all our intercourse, and shed a grace upon the humblest and homeliest life. There is a courtesy and a mutual observance which is the peculiar dignity and sweetness of a Christian; and the source of it is, that he sees the presence of his Lord in others, and reveres Him in himself. Only the true Christian can have real self-respect. From this springs purity of manners, language, conversation, and amusements in private and social life. How awfully St. Paul uses this great spiritual fact of our incorporation with Christ to enforce the sanctification of the body.

Hence, also, arises the great law of charity and alms: our blessed Lord has founded it upon His own mystical presence in all His members, especially in the poor, the hungry, the sorrowing, the sick, and the dying. And what thought is so full of soothing and consolation? The union of Christ's members with Him gives us, not only a law of loving reverence for the living, but above all for the dead. When the soul has departed to a more intimate union with Christ in the unseen rest, the body also is still united to Him who is "the

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Resurrection and the Life." Though the soul is parted from the body, both are still one in Him; and that union is the pledge that they shall be reunited at His coming. It is this faith which has taught Christians a loving care for their dead. Though the sleeping body can no longer consciously receive the offices of love, yet it does not cease to be worthy of a sacred honour: it is a part of the mystical body of the Lord. Before the Word was made flesh, a dead body was an unclean thing; to touch it was pollution: but since His holy Incarnation, the bodies of the regenerate are holy,—honourable in the dishonour of corruption. Therefore we lay them out, and deck them with pure and spotless array, dressing them with flowers or with costlier beauty, and bear them forth in processions with chants of thanksgiving. A Christian burial, from the most royal pageant to the lowliest bier, is a work of loving reverence, an earthly type of baptism, a confession of the faith, a shadow from the altar, where is the true body of Him who died and rose again.

2. And one more thought we may take from this blessed mystery; I mean, with what veneration and devotion we ought to behave ourselves towards the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

The first truth which must force itself upon

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every one who has faith in this great gift of love is, the duty and blessedness of celebrating it with the greatest possible frequency. Nothing surely ought to restrain this frequency, except the awfulness of the blessed Sacrament, and the danger of unworthiness in the celebrant and the receivers. But this is a subject far too wide to enter upon by the way. Frequent communion does indeed demand a high tone of habitual devotion and of inward recollection in the pastors of the Church. And this is both their highest blessing and their strictest law of life. Happy, and full of all benediction to ourselves and to our flocks, if we could so live as to be always meet to draw near to Him. But it is not more certain that frequent communion demands high devotion, than that a belief in the Real Presence demands frequent celebration. How can we be said to believe what we do not act upon? "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."[1] Surely, if there be any thing in which "faith without works is dead," it is in a profession of believing Christ's Presence in the holy Sacrament while we rarely celebrate it. They who do not believe in this divine gift are consistent in approaching it once a year: but should we be consistent, if, believing, we celebrate it but three or four times a

[1] St. James ii. 18.

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year? A living faith in this spiritual reality would make infrequent communion impossible. Where the holy Eucharist is not, the ritual of the Church is as a day when the sun goes down at noon. We should feel as if the worship of God through Christ had lost its central light. All the whole life of the regenerate is related to this great fountain of grace; all issues from it, and returns into it again. When the altar stands cold and bare, they are bid to go empty away.

But if this be the effect of such a faith upon the frequency, what must it also be upon the manner of celebrating this holy sacrament? What do mean and naked altars, often wormed and decaying; worn and paltry furniture, worthless vessels, and, worse than all, rough and reckless handling, certainly reveal? Belief of His presence, or assurance of His absence? But alas, our own sins are enough—too many and too deep that we should look on others. With what a conscious feeling of direct and personal service done to our Master should we tend and dress that which is a shadow of His cross and of His grave; with what respect should we handle and care for even the least and poorest vessel, sacred by relation to His presence. Above all, with what a collected sense of His nearness ought we to fulfil our function in offering the memorial of His one only sa-

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crifice, by taking, blessing, breaking the Bread of life to His people! If only we could apprehend by a living faith, and realise the very truth of what we do, we should feel that after His sacramental Presence, and our standing there to serve before Him, nothing remains but the homage of the blessed in the vision of His face in heaven.

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SERMON XII.

THE ONLY SACRIFICE.

HEB. x. 12-14.

"This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

THERE is, and there can be, only one atonement for the sin of the world—the sacrifice of the death of Christ. This alone is in itself meritorious, propitiatory, and of infinite price and power.

And this is, in fact, the whole argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews. St. Paul is shewing that the law of Moses was in itself of no power or price; that it could make no propitiation, no true atonement in the eternal world; that the vileness of the sacrifices was enough to shew their impotence: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away

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sins." If the vileness of the sacrifices confessed their impotence, much more did their perpetual repetition: "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." This very iteration, like the repeated use of medicines in sickness, proved that they were of no avail: for when medicines heal, they are no longer needed. Nay, those sacrifices did more, they directly declared the sin which they could not take away. "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year."[1] They were a shadow and promise of a sacrifice yet to come, which in itself should be full, final, and absolute. "Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once* for all. And every priest standeth *daily* ministering and offering *oftentimes* the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered *one* sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God."[2] Such is the whole idea of this divine argument. These many

[1] Heb. x. 2, 3. [2] Heb. x. 8-12.

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priests, many sacrifices, daily offerings, were shadows of the one only true Priest, the one only and continual Sacrifice for sin, which is Jesus Christ.

In this we see the true and full perfection of the sacrifice of the cross; and that perfection may be expressed in two words,—that it is one, and that it is continuous. Let us, by His help, dwell a while on this blessed mystery.

1. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then, is one. There is no other like it, or second after it. It is not the highest of a kind, or the perfecting of any order of oblations; but like His person, a mystery sole and apart: "for such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And as with the priest, so with the sacrifice. In what does this unity consist? In the nature, the quality, and the passion of Him who offered up Himself. It is one and unapproachable, because He was a Divine Person, both God and man. In Him was not only the blood of the animal life, nor the blood of man made in the image of God, but the blood of a Man who is God: why shall we fear to say with St. Paul, the Blood of God?[1] Never was such oblation as this offered up before, since the world was made. Man had sinned against God, and God as man offered Himself up for man. The

[1] Acts xx. 28.

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guilt was against an infinite love, and infinite was the atonement. The broken law was infinite in sanctity, the price which healed the breach was infinite in worth. A world's ransom must be divine, and God gave it when He gave Himself.

In like manner the sacrifice is one, and above all, in the quality of the person who, as God, was holy, as man, was sinless. It was not the obedience only of man for man, but of man without sin; nor only of sinless man for sinners, but the obedience of God. The obedience unto death was both human and divine. He who was born of the Ever-Virgin Mother was God, He who hung upon the tree was God, spotless and holy, the fountain of holiness, the sanctifier of the world.

And further, as the nature and the quality, so the passion of Christ gives to His sacrifice an unity of transcendent perfection. Being sinless as man, and being also God, He suffered all the sorrows of the fall, and died. All that was due to sin, the Sinless bare in Himself; all that was due to us, but as far as the breadth of eternal righteousness from Him, He willingly endured. Wonderful and stupendous mystery. God "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."[1] "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."[2]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 21. [2] 1 St. Peter i. 24.

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Christ "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."[1] The very heart, will, soul, and sensitive nature of our manhood, both in the flesh and in the spirit, was in Him afflicted and crucified. All that sorrow, pain, and death could wreak upon Him He received into His open heart for us. Righteous, holy, pure, perfect in love both to God and man, He offered up Himself as a sacrifice of atonement between God and man. What other sacrifice has even the shadow of this unity of perfection? What self-sacrifice of man is sinless? What other sacrifice is divine?

Therefore we adore this one great Oblation as one, alone, unapproachable, absolute, and transcending the order of creation: the only true "perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." This, then, is its unity.

2. But further, it is not only one, but continuous. As by its unity it abolished the multitude of oblations, so by its continuity it abolished the repetition of sacrifices. To add one more would be to deny its final atonement. That which is infinite cannot be numbered. It is one, not only because it has no second, but because infinity has no number.

[1] 1 St. Peter iii. 18.

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For the same reason, what is infinite must be, in time, continuous; for in itself it is eternal. The sacrifice of Christ is as everlasting as His person. All the new creation of God is built upon it. The cross is the foundation of "eternal redemption."[1] Even in foresight its atonement was perfect. The Lamb was "slain from the beginning of the world." All the generations of God's elect, from righteous Abel until the oblation upon Calvary, were redeemed by the continuous virtue of this one great sacrifice offered in the Divine foreknowledge. After He had, in time, once offered up Himself for ever, He sat down, the everlasting sacrifice, at the right hand of God. From the great day of atonement until now, all the elect of God have been made perfect through the continuous power of that one oblation, made once for all. He is now fulfilling the Priest's office of intercession over the blood of atonement "within the veil."[2] His intercession is the perpetual presenting of His own sacrifice, that is, of Himself, bearing the wounds of His passion. The memorial, the very and true reality of the cross, is always in heaven. He was pierced on Calvary, but His passion is still before the mercy-seat. He was pierced eighteen hundred years ago, but His blood was shed four thousand years before, and

[1] Heb. ix. 12. [2] Heb. vi. 19, 20.

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His wounds are fresh and atoning until now. His sacrifice is eternal. Though every light in the firmament of heaven were a world, and every world dead in sin; and though time should multiply the generations of sinners for ever; yet that one sacrifice for sin would infinitely redeem all worlds.

Now this leads to two high and blessed truths, revealed to us for our endless consolation.

1. The first is, that the holy Eucharist is a real and true sacrifice. Can it be necessary to say, that when the Sacrament upon the altar is called a sacrifice, it does not mean a sacrifice added to the sacrifice of the cross? That would be to contradict alike all revelation and all reason; to make not one only sacrifice, but many; to make them either nothing or infinite; either to add to what is already infinite, or to give an infinite value to a finite oblation; which is, in truth, to deny the need and reality of all sacrifices whatsoever. Let such a thought, then, be at once and for ever cast aside. Nothing can be added to that which is already perfect. Neither, again, is the Eucharist a sacrifice separate from the sacrifice of the cross; for what sacrifice but that alone can "take away sin?" No acts or offerings of men, any more than the blood of bulls and goats, can take away sin. Faith and adoration

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cannot; for they need an atonement to be themselves accepted at all. No creature, no universe of creatures, even deathless and sinless, could atone for one sin. Therefore, neither as added to, nor as separate from, the sacrifice of Christ is the holy Eucharist a sacrifice. In what sense, then, is it so called? Let us take the analogy and progress of the great evangelical revelation as our guide, and we shall be at no loss to understand.

Before Christ offered up Himself upon the cross, God ordained the sacrifices of the Law, as types and shadows of a sacrifice yet to come. They were sacraments looking forward to the cross. Since Christ has offered His one oblation of Himself, the broken bread and the wine poured out upon the altar are memorials of a sacrifice already perfect. It is a sacrifice looking backward to the cross.

Thus far is clear. It is representative and commemorative. The bread and the wine represent the mystery of the Incarnation; the breaking of the bread, and the pouring forth of the wine, the passion of the crucifixion; the offering them upon the altar before God, the mystery of His own sacrifice upon the cross. So far the analogy of God's earlier revelation gives an exact parallel. But this is not all. It also applies the one Sacrifice to us.

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The Law had "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." The Gospel is not the counterpart of the Law, but its fulfilment; or rather, it is the greater which contains the less. Whatever we find of grace in the Law, we shall find with much more, in "measure pressed down and running over," in the Gospel. The Law was a shadow, "the body is of Christ:" that is to say, first, the personal work and passion of Christ, His incarnation and atonement, all that He did and suffered in Himself, summed up in the one sacrifice upon the cross; and next—for this is not all—the application of this work, that is, of His one all-sufficient sacrifice, to the souls of His elect. The Law, then, is fulfilled in the body of Christ, that is, in the person of Christ, and in His Church. Shadows, by passing through His cross, have become sacraments; what before stood empty is now full of grace; symbols are now mysteries; the outward signs have received the fellowship of inward grace. They are wedded together, as the Church is to Christ, by the Holy Ghost, which, through His incarnation, has been shed abroad upon His mystical body. We are now in a dispensation of faith, and "faith is the *substance* of things hoped for." "By one oblation He hath perfected," that is, consecrated wholly to God, "for ever them that

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are sanctified." In and for Himself, therefore, in virtue, price, and power, He has redeemed all mankind. But for our salvation, that one perfect sacrifice must be directly and personally applied to every particular soul. The offering of the one sacrifice to the Father is the ministry of Christ by Himself; the application of that one sacrifice to us is the ministry of Christ by the Spirit.

There are some, indeed, who say that we apply this sacrifice to ourselves—as the Pelagians, and their followers, whether they adopt their whole error, or only a part of it. All these agree in thinking that we can of our "own natural strength turn to God," "do good works," or, at least, apply God's grace to ourselves. Many other and better Christians, who believe the sovereignty of God's grace as a doctrine, but are careless either in thought or language, use the same words. When their attention is called to such phrases as that "by faith we apply the sacrifice of Christ to ourselves," they at once correct themselves, and say, that "faith is the gift of God; and that they mean no more than that, through the gift of faith, we receive the application of the sacrifice of Christ at the hands of God." This is, indeed, the pure truth of the Gospel; for it is as much a work of Christ to apply His sacrifice to us, as to offer it to His Father. It is His sovereign and sacerdotal act

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as priest and king. By baptism He first applies to us the blood of His Passion for the remission of sins; through faith and love He continually unites us more and more unto Himself; by absolution He applies His atonement to every true penitent; by the holy Eucharist He applies His passion to the sanctification of all faithful souls. All these are, as it were, fruits of His one sacrifice—channels through which the grace of it flows to us, and pledges of its application to us, one by one. But it may be asked, Why, then, are not all these called sacrifices? In one sense all may be, that is, spiritual sacrifices, acts of faith, love, thanksgiving. But there is an eminent and peculiar sense in which the holy Eucharist bears this title, in which no other sacrament or office of the Church partakes.

For, as we have already said, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ is a visible memorial and representation of His crucifixion and oblation. This baptism is not, and no other mystery of the Gospel is ordained to be. Our blessed Lord, in the very act of institution, made it a representation of the sacrifice of Himself. "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. . . . . And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remem-

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brance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you."[1] In this our blessed Lord did truly, in a symbolical act, offer and give Himself to die upon the cross. Through all His life no man could lay hands on Him, because His "hour was not yet come." But now, knowing that the time was come that He should "go unto the Father," and having "power over His life," so that no man could take it from Him; having "power to lay it down, and power to take it again;" He here, by a solemn act of self-oblation, gave Himself, as the true Paschal Lamb, to be offered and eaten by us. The act of that hour was related to the oblation upon the cross, as its shadow cast on before. He then, in will and purpose, offered Himself; and His own body, which He had there consecrated for our sakes unto His Father, He afterwards gave in full on Calvary. In its first institution, therefore, the Sacrament of His Body and His Blood was a true sacrifice of Himself, through the symbols of bread and wine.

And thus, St. Paul expressly declares the tradition of the Church: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given

[1] St. Luke xxii. 15, 19, 20.

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thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."[1] "Ye do *shew*;" that is, shew forth and exhibit, as St. Paul said to the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you."[2] And not only so; not only before men, but before God, exhibited in the sight of heaven. The Sacrament of His Body broken and Blood shed is spread forth upon the altar as before God, to whom He offered up Himself. All sacrifice, and all memorials of sacrifice, terminate in the Divine presence, before the mercy-seat.

What the sacrifices of the Law then offered in type, we offer in fulfilment; what they promised, this applies to us. When our blessed Lord took bread, and said, "This is My body," and the cup, saying, "This is My blood," He did not speak in metaphor and figure. What He spake, they are; what they are, we offer. In that holy Sacrament He is really present; and by His real

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 23-26. [2] Gal. iii. 1.

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presence it is the one and continual offering of Himself.

2. And this leads us to the other truth of which I spoke; I mean, that it is He who truly offers Himself for us perpetually, both in heaven and earth, through and with His mystical body, the Church. The Church is so united to Him as to be one with Him. It lives and acts in Him alone. Every member of it, and every act of it, out of Christ is dead. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."[1] This is the first foundation of the Church—its perfect unity of life and act with Christ its Head. As there is but one sacrifice, so there is but one priesthood. All that the Church offers is Christ, and all that the priesthood of the Church does in spirit and in truth is done by Christ. They are but His representatives and vicars: many, because finite; but all one in Him, their office one, and their acts one. He alone is king and priest, and in Him the whole Church is a "royal priesthood."[2] He has "made us unto our God kings and priests."[3] Every Christian is spiritually a king and a priest, because anointed in Christ. The Church has therefore a twofold priesthood, internal and external; the internal, which

[1] St. John xv. 6. [2] 1 St. Peter ii. 9. [3] Rev. v. 10.

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is hidden and universal in every member; the external, which is visible and particular, delegated to the sacerdotal order by Christ Himself. The external priesthood is the expression and embodying of the internal, which thereby fulfils its ministry of sacrifice and worship. It is as the ministry of the body to the powers and endowments of the soul; as speech is to thought, or power to will. But whether internal or external, it is all one priesthood still; the priesthood of Christ descending from the Head to the body, whereby He offers the body in Himself, and the body, in and for itself, offers Him unto the Father.[1]

In this, then, we see what is the Christian sacrifice. It is Christ in heaven offering Himself in visible presence; and on earth, by His ministering priesthood, offering Himself in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. Though manifold in operation, and various in kinds and accidents, it is still all one sacrifice, one priesthood, one continuous act of memorial and exhibition to the Father, of union and application to the Church. In one word, then, what is it that we offer unto God? It is the infinite merits of His Son; the infinite price which, by His incarnation and His death, He has paid for our redemption. These merits He has given to His Church. They are hers, because they

[1] S. Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. x. 19; xxii. 10.

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are His. Having nothing of her own, no riches, no "upper or nether springs," no "raiment of needlework," no "form or comeliness," no dowry of her own, He has endowed her with Himself: Christ is the dowry of the Church. This is the sole and only foundation of our hope. Through Him, and in Him alone, we come unto the Father. Every prayer must pass through His merits. Every work of repentance, faith, and love, must ascend through His one sacrifice of Himself. Blessed poverty, to have nothing, that we may possess Christ! for then "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Verily, for our sakes He became poor, that we by His poverty might be made infinitely rich. Wonderful mystery of eternal love! As all the multitude of stars hide their borrowed light in the brightness of the morning sun, and all mountains, lands, and seas are fulfilled with the overflow of his one universal splendour; so all shadows and types of sacrifice, offered up through the long weary night of expectation, vanished before the one great oblation made upon the cross. And now from the highest heaven that infinite atonement sheds itself abroad in all the earth. Wheresoever there is an altar in the name of Christ, there is the memorial of His cross. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that

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dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."[1] The sacrifices of one nation, impure, and with blood of beasts, have passed away, and the words of the prophet are fulfilled: "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering."[2] Even so as Thy prophet hath spoken; in Thy holy Church throughout all the world Thy name is glorified; the incense of perpetual prayer goes up before Thee, and the pure oblation, the Lamb without blemish and without spot, is laid alway upon Thine altar. Blessed mystery, too little realised, even by those who trust in it. The world cannot receive it, "because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." "The Light" even now "shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."[3] Let us strive more clearly to discern this great object of faith, Christ evermore offering Himself for us. Evermore: not "that He should offer Himself often; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;"[4] not often, but evermore: reconciling

[1] Isaiah ix. 2.
[2] Malachi i. 11.
[3] St. John i. 5.
[4] Heb. ix. 26.

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us continually, after all our sins of wilfulness, ignorance, infirmity; making steadfast the peace He has wrought between God and us upon the cross. Let this thought dwell in us continually, that all our hope may be in Him alone. Day by day let us draw near to Him, to wash our soiled robes and make them white in the blood of His only sacrifice. In that fountain we must wash ourselves, our souls and bodies, our sins and our good works, our prayers and our repentance. And when these are washed, what can remain unclean? Above all, let us ever adore Him more and more in His blessed Presence with us in the sacrament of His love. To that let us come as to the foot of His cross, in sorrowing faith and loving hope; praying that, as He suffered a poor penitent with unclean lips to kiss His feet at supper, and to stand all cleansed beside His cross on Calvary, so He may suffer us, all trembling with our conscious guilt, to touch Him through the sacrament of His atonement, lest we die. Let us come to Him, saying, "If I must die, Lord, rather will I die here at Thy feet, than afar off; if haply even the shadow of Thy sacrifice may fall upon me, and under it I be found at last, resting in hope at that day."

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SERMON XIII.

THE FEAST OF THE OLD CREATION AND THE NEW.

ZECH. ix. 17.

"How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."

ZECHARIAH wrote this prophecy when he and his brethren of the captivity were in Babylon. All through the earlier part of the book he has been foretelling the return of God's people and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This is the literal intention of his words: "Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of

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boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."[1] "The seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew."[2] "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things."[3] "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord."[4] "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts

[1] Zech. viii. 3-5.
[2] Zech. viii. 12.
[3] Jerem. xxxi. 3-5.
[4] Jerem. xxxi. 12-14.

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of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil."[1] "Your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid."[2] "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them."[3] In all these prophecies there is a blessed vision of peace—a time of joy after sorrow, of freedom after bondage: every man calling his neighbour "under the vine and

[1] Joel ii. 21-24. [2] Levit. xxvi. 5, 6.

[3] Amos ix. 13, 14.

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under the fig-tree."[1] And the symbols by which the goodness of the Lord is exhibited are corn and wine. "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."[2] "Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil."[3] "Israel shall dwell in safety alone, and the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine."[4] "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."

In all these passages there is a voice of joy, a grateful and festal gladness: the city "full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof;" the waste cities inhabited; virgins rejoicing in the dance, "old men and young together." As corn and wine are chief symbols of the Divine goodness, so the feast of harvest is a chief symbol of a divine joy. It is spoken of as the special token of gladness; and its taking away, as the special token of affliction. "Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah; I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh; for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen.

[1] Zech. iii. 10.
[2] Hosea ii. 21, 22.
[3] Joel ii. 19.
[4] Deut. xxxiii. 28.

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And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage shouting to cease."[1] And so, when God poured out blessings on His people, the prophet says, "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest."[2]

Surely all this is not only history, but prophecy. All these visions of earthly blessing have their heavenly substance. They shew us the joy and the feast of the old creation; God's people rejoicing under His benign Fatherhood, eating the fruits of the earth with a holy gladness. But what are all these,—the joy of God's people in Jerusalem, the holy mountain, the cities of peace, the fair lands, the fruitful vineyards, the corn and the wine, the harvest and the vintage, the shouting and the feast of ingathering,—what are they all but one great prophecy, a symbol and a sacrament, the old creation in its earthly festival witnessing and waiting for the new?

In this same chapter, the prophet, by one word, lights up the whole mystery. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon

[1] Isaiah xvi. 9, 10. [2] Ibid. ix. 3.

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an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."[1] This reveals all. It is "the Israel of God,"[2] after long waiting and affliction, redeemed from death; the whole election, both the elder and the later, not of Israel alone, but of all nations, gathered into the city of God. "When the eyes of man," that is, of all mankind, "as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord;"[3] "and all nations shall flow unto" Him.[4] "The Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land;"[5] that is, they shall be gathered to the Word made flesh; to the cross high and lifted up on Calvary; unto which, by His love and power, He draws all hearts.[6] What is this but the rejoicing of His mystical body, the Church, in all the world; the song of His saints: all kindreds and people coming up out of dark lands and the shadow of death, to the light of eternal life, worshipping "the brightness of His rising;" lifting up their oblations and their hands, with the voice of adoration: "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!"

It is a luminous prophecy of the Word made flesh, revealed first by personal manifestation upon earth, and then by His Spirit through the Church.

[1] Zech. ix. 9. [2] Gal. vi. 16. [3] Zech. ix. 1.
[4] Isaiah ii. 2. [5] Zech. ix. 16. [6] St. John xii. 32.

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What is this "goodness" and this "beauty," but the perfect mystery of His divine manhood? They are not so much two attributes as two aspects of His person. Goodness is inward beauty, beauty is outward goodness. They are inseparable; and express to us the perfection of Him who is God and Man: perfect alike in both; in majesty and meekness, in love and in humility, in His passion and in His power.

And as it is a prophecy of the Incarnation, so it is also of the holy Eucharist, the feast of the new creation. For He is this "corn" and "wine" of gladness. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[1] "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. . . . . The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."[2]

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth

[1] St. John xii. 24. [2] Ibid. vi. 33-35, 51.

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in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone."[1] This is the true corn and wine of God's kingdom,—the harvest and the vintage of the cross. He was bruised by a divine agony in the garden of oil-presses: He gave His body to be broken, and His blood to be poured out for us. "For this" the true "Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, . . . King of righteousness, . . . King of peace,"[2] "brought forth bread and wine,"[3] and "blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."[4]

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast."[5] We have the wine of Cana; the bread of the five thousand in the wilderness, the feast of joy and love, of goodness and beauty, as "the joy of harvest, and singing, when the vintage is done." This is the feast of the new creation, which the Church on earth keeps by a perpetual celebration, until, when our toil is over,

[1] Isaiah lxiii. 1-3. [2] Heb. vii. 1, 2. [3] Gen. xiv. 18.
[4] St. Matt. xxvi. 26-29. [5] 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

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we shall sit down with Him at the "marriage supper of the Lamb."

Let us see now from what deep fountain the joy of this feast overflows. There is something sad and repulsive in the tone of command with which the blessedness of the holy communion is forced upon sated and reluctant minds. If there be a precept in the kingdom of God, this is indeed a commandment sanctioned by the most awful realities of love and fear. It is our Redeemer who said, "This do in remembrance of Me." It is the command He gave in His night of agony, when His "soul was sorrowful even unto death." If love and gratitude can awaken obedience, who then can disobey? or if gratitude and love cannot obtain it, will not even fear prevail? "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."[1] And yet, after all, there is something unloving and cold in alarming and upbraiding those that will not come. It may be necessary to alarm cold and unloving Christians; but it is a sad necessity, convicting us of being cold and loveless. If we see no goodness or beauty in His sacrament of love, words of chilling duty will never kindle our hearts, or open our eyes. What we lack is love: this would give us the prophet's sight to say, "O how great!" But perhaps

[1] St. John vi. 53.

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we believe that we do already honour the holy sacrament, duly frequent, and worthily receive it; perhaps at times we have a perception of its sweetness, or at least we think so: and yet to how many communicants would He say, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."[1] This is the state of too many. They are as men that have no eye for beauty, no ear for harmonies. With too many of us "He hath no form nor comeliness," nor any "beauty that we should desire Him."[2] And what is this incapacity for the blessedness of His presence but the beginning of that state in which His face shall be no more seen?

Let us, then, endeavour, by His help, to meditate, not on the worthiness required in us, but on the blessings which the Lord of the harvest pours out on those who come to this supper, where He is both the Master and the Feast.

1. The first grace He gives is rest. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until

[1] Rev. iii. 17, 18. [2] Isaiah liii. 2.

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the evening."[1] But the Master stands in the midst, ever saying to His servants, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is the labourer's reward when the work is done: at eventide, when the toil is over, and the sun is down, when the burden and the heat of the day have been endured, then comes rest. But we serve a pitiful Master, and He, in His compassion, gives us rest, not only once for all, when this toilsome life is over, but oftentimes all through our life; all day long He breaks in upon our toil with times of resting. Month by month, week by week, day by day, if our hearts were ready and yearned for the food of life, He would restore our strength.

Rest is manifold, and in the holy Sacrament He gives it in its fulness. First, He gives rest from the burden of sin, assuring us of forgiveness. If we come with true contrition, and with a pure and humble confession, He will unbind the burden, and take it from our shoulder. He will make us to feel that He is at peace with us; that between Him and us there is no veil of fear; that our sins past are put away; and that the long chain by which we have dragged a load of many iniquities, galling and wearying our soul, is broken asunder. This is the rest He gives to contrite hearts. And

[1] Ps. civ. 23.

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if we may kneel before Him loosed from our sins, what more can we desire? Is not sin the one thing that makes life unhappy, and death terrible? Why should we fear to die, but because "we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins;" because "the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, and the burden of them is intolerable?" The sting of guilt and the stain of sin, these are our chief unrest. To be free from these would be the beginning of bliss; and in the holy Sacrament of His death and passion, if only we would believe, He would perfect our absolution. The mortal sins which in times past we have committed, having been penitently confessed, He will make us to feel that it is in the power of His Church to loose. All through life this assurance grows deeper in the devout communicant. The past is not forgotten, it does not lose its blackness; nay, it is more keenly perceived; it is seen to be even darker than we saw before; and yet we seem to pass through the holy communion farther and farther from our former selves, into the depth of His presence. The consciousness of past guilt remains, but it is suspended in a consciousness of present rest. It abides for our humiliation, and as a mark of shame within; but it loses its angry and awful countenance. It condemns no more, but is itself condemned. We can hate it, and fear nothing; for our Redeemer

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loves us, and in Him we are "clean every whit." In like manner of the sins which we commit daily. Happy is the man who passes from one act of holy communion to another without laying up a score of sins needing to be forgiven. I do not mean deliberate and wilful, though these, alas, too often mingle with the throng of lesser offences; but sins of weakness or surprise, of strong and sudden temptations. These cleave to us; and though no number of them make one deadly sin, yet their effect upon the soul is dangerous, preparing it for greater evil. Often falling needs often cleansing; and this fountain stands ever open to us. Who that knows the world and sin, the tempter and himself, and will not rather need a fence, lest he come too easily, than a goad to force him to this sacrament of pardon?

For, again, it is not only in the peace of forgiveness that the holy communion gives us rest. It also sets the heart and will free from the misery of inward faults. It is a remedy, all-healing, never failing, except through our fault, against anger, pride, luxury, sloth, envy, and the like. And what but these are our chief tormentors? What holds us in bondage but ourselves? We are our own scourges: we carry our miseries within. What makes us fretful, sensitive, wincing, sick at heart; what, as we say, galls and stings us, but

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our inward heart sins? While these live in us, we can have no rest. Though all the world go smooth and fair without, these would make our days bitter and our nights sleepless. Now it is from these also that the power of Christ's presence sets us free. He plucks up the very roots of this bitterness, and quenches the smouldering heats which sear the heart. But none can speak of this rest, except he that knows it by experience; and none know it but the sincere and watchful. It is a foretaste of that sinless calm which remaineth for the people of God.

2. And when He gives rest, He gives also refreshment. He does not only say, "I will give you rest," but in words that mean, "I will refresh you,"[1] He renews our strength for labours still to come. We are not yet at the great Harvest Home. The sun must go down again and again upon our reaping field before our work is over. We all know what is the exhaustion of bodily strength, the drying up of powers, and almost of life, by heavy toil; but how few are conscious of the perpetual decays of the spiritual life, that is, of humility, sincerity, patience, gentleness, devotion, which come upon us all day long! The soul wastes faster than the body. Every night gives

[1] Compare St. Matt. xi. 28, with the "Office for the Holy Communion."

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back to the body what every day takes from it: but with the soul, not so. The pride, sloth, impatience of to-day fret and prey upon the grace which is in us, as a blight upon the promise of harvest. The spiritual decays of to-day run on into to-morrow, and to-morrow begins with an inclination to a lower tone; its own temptations swell the evil: one day heaps its sin upon another, and our spiritual decline gains in speed as it gains in time. In this there is one specially alarming thought. The degrees are so shadowy, and the transitions so imperceptible, that it is like a motion too slow to be measured by the eye, or so intense as to seem like rest. These decays are always advancing in every soul not supported by habitual communion with Christ. Even the most devout complain of them, and fear them more than others. And this is one cause why frequent communion is a special mark of a devout life. Such persons feeling in themselves a perpetual inclination to decay, seek in the blessed Sacrament a perpetual supply of restoring grace. It is this that keeps them from declension. "In the strength of that meat" they toil on "to Horeb, the mount of God:" by the sustaining corn and wine of His elect, they "go from strength to strength." If any one, then, has some peculiar temptation which habitually besets him, and often

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gains the mastery, that is a special reason for frequent communion. Let him not disquiet himself by alarms, as by remembering that he has lately fallen, and fearing to fall again; if only he be truly sorrowful and ashamed, out of a sincere love of Christ, and a sincere hatred of his sin, let him by all means return to the blessed Sacrament as a strength and remedy against relapse. If he refuse strength, fall he must. If he say, I will not come till I have got the upperhand of this temptation, when will he come? And how can he get the mastery? Can he overcome without the grace of Christ? Can he have it if he turn away from it? Now here is an unspeakable consolation for the tempted; for all who feel the lowering and blighting effect of the world, of dangerous companions to whom duty binds them, of trying positions from which they cannot escape, of fiery temptations searching their inmost thoughts. Let them be of good heart. Only stand firm against the assaults and crafts of Satan, only divide your sins from you by the barrier of fear and hatred, by the opposition of your will and prayers; the blessed Sacrament shall then be your strength, and the presence of Christ shall restore all your spiritual decays. What you have lost shall be made up to you; what you have still to encounter you shall be abundantly strengthened to endure. Be

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your path never so rough and sharp, "thy shoes shall be as iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."[1] Come and cast yourselves upon His full forgiveness for the past, and upon His omnipotence for the future. What more can you need? And this not once, not twice, nor for a third time only, but always, and for ever; continually bringing to Him your sorrows and your complaints: pleading against yourselves, then, go forth again refreshed, as if to begin anew, and as for the first time, another life of hope.

3. Lastly, in this great feast of joy He gives us the conscious perception of His love. I say the perception, because we already have the knowledge, the tokens, and the pledges. He has said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."[2] We have His word, we have His holy passion, we have the benedictions and mercies of our whole life long. Is not this enough? Enough on His part, and to spare; but not enough on ours. We know it, confess it, believe it; but we do not *feel* it. Love alone, by its own kindred perception, feels love. And this crowning grace the Master gives to His servants, at this feast of rest. He "sheds abroad" His "love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." His love falls as a light of fire, making hearts that

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 25. [2] St. John xv. 13.

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long for Him to burn. Then all is revealed: His cross and our sin, His goodness and our evil, His beauty and our deformity of soul. Love is the light in which He is seen, and all things in His presence. "The love of the Lord passeth all things for illumination."[1] If we would see ourselves as we are, we must first "see Him as He is." And this gift of light He infuses into the lowliest penitent, howsoever slow of intellect, howsoever dull of understanding. If the heart be pure or broken, He will pour in oil and wine, His spirit and His blood, the gift of light and love. This is the source of all devotion. To feel His love shining down upon them draws them in love to Him again; binds them in love to all the creatures of His hand, to all for whom He died; kindles in them repentance and compunction, holy patience and holy obedience; cleanses and consumes away the sins of flesh and spirit, and makes their whole life a living sacrifice, in likeness of His own. O words easily spoken; too high and excellent for such as we; still, spoken they must be. May He not lay them to our charge, or judge us by them! Blessed life, to which they who know it say nothing of earth may be compared. They have seen His goodness and His beauty, His passion and His purity, the "Rose of Sharon and the

[1] Ecclus. xxv. 11.

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Lily of the valleys;"[1] and the burden of their heart all day long is, "O how great!" Nothing in this world allures them, for they have seen fairer things than these; nothing dazzles their eyes, for they have looked upon a brighter glory; nothing draws them aside, for they have tasted of the eternal sweetness. The Beauty, ancient but always new, drowns all lights of earth. And not fair and bright things only, but crosses and sorrows, rods and afflictions; these have no terrors and no sharpness. They can see by whose hand these gifts are stretched forth to them, and in each they count the print of the nails, the pledges of His love and nearness. They have one great longing, in which all other desires are lost; not wealth, honour, power, learning, home, or happiness; nothing of time, or in time. Their whole soul is an hungered to "eat bread in the kingdom of God;" to drink of the fruit of the vine, "new with Him in His Father's kingdom." They are athirst for the great Harvest Home, where the feast shall be eternal. When the white cloud shall be seen in heaven, and the Son of Man shall sit upon it, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle; when He that was reaped, bruised, and garnered, and hath given Himself to us for our spiritual food in power and

[1] Song of Solomon ii. 1.

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mystery, shall reap the earth; when the harvest of the elect is stored in heaven, and the eternal feast is spread in the new creation of God: O blessed and glorious fellowship! O holy feast! O banquet of desire! where care is not, nor cloying, but fulness with endless desire; when we shall for ever rest, and shall behold how sweet the Lord is, and how great the multitude of His sweetness. O blessed vision, to see God in Himself, to see Him in us, and ourselves in Him, with blissful joy and joyful bliss; to sit at that feast ineffable, "where Thou, with Thy Son, and the Holy Ghost, art unto Thy saints true light, perfect fulness, everlasting joy, gladness consummate, endless bliss!" "To whom be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might for ever and ever. Amen."

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SERMON XIV.

THE PASSOVER GREATLY DESIRED.

St. Luke xxii. 15.

"And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

THESE words were spoken by our Lord in the night of His betrayal. When the hour was come, He sat down to the last supper with His disciples, and His "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." As they were eating, He said: "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you." It must indeed have been a desire "stronger than death," ardent and divine, which could rise above the anguish of such an hour. Sorrow and the shadow of death draw men's hearts into themselves, and quench the vividness of other thoughts, the desires of other days. But His thirst of love nothing could slake. It burned the more as the hour of His Passion drew near. We cannot enter into the divine intensity of this desire; but it would seem that the longing He

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had to eat this Passover with His disciples before He suffered, arose from the consciousness, that in that hour and in that act He would for ever put an end to shadows, and bring in the substance of our redemption. Year by year, until that night, the lamb of the Passover had prophesied the atonement in His blood. The whole Church had yearly celebrated a sacrament prefiguring His death; but the shadows were now passed away. The true Light was come; the true Lamb, the true Sacrifice, the only bloodshedding was at hand.

And besides this, we may believe that He desired that hour with the ardent longing of our human infirmity, because it was the winding up of the long years in which He had waited for His bitter passion: "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The fear of death is a pure human affection, a natural and sinless shrinking from grappling with the powers of sin, and from the pangs which we must suffer in the struggle. He too foresaw the sharpness of death which He had undertaken to overcome; and this foresight "straitened" Him. It was now near to begin, and the end was not far off. The sooner begun, the sooner ended. We go forth even with impatience to meet sorrows which we cannot turn aside.

But there was, perhaps, another reason. That

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last mournful Passover was a solace to the Son of man. It was sad, but sweet. It was to be the last time that He should so converse with the disciples and friends who had long loved and followed Him. We all know what the last day or the last night is before some great parting, before some happy time comes to an end; before some departure, some change which reaches to the foundations of home and heart: the last evening spent in some loved haunt, the last meeting with some fond friends, the last time of doing some familiar work, the last partaking in some act of common devotion. It is soothing, and yet so calm as almost to take away its power to soothe. We look on to it, and long for it, though its coming only brings the end the sooner. Yet in itself it is so blessed, that we shut our eyes, and will not look beyond, leaving the morrow to come, if it must. There are two great seasons of perfect sweetness and sadness, farewells and death-beds. They are times which draw out all tenderness and love: and some such thoughts and feelings were no doubt in the heart of our blessed Master when He looked on to this eventide, and said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

These thoughts give a peculiar depth, and, if I may so speak, a divine pathos to His words. Perhaps we have never heard them without feeling

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their intensity of meaning. How powerful and persuasive is every word and act of His in that hour of unutterable tenderness and sorrow. What a light it casts upon the blessed Sacrament which He then bequeathed to us, and on the law which binds us to it.

1. For first, this shews us that the holy Sacrament is this last Passover continuing still. What was then begun is a perpetual celebration. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast." The whole life of the Church is a paschal festival. Every year brings Easter back; but Easter is in every week. It ought to be in every day. This is the Passover He so ardently desired; the very substance which He then brought in and ordained for ever. When He sat with His Apostles, He took bread and wine, and offered up Himself both in figure and reality. The sign and the substance were then united in one act, and are inseparable. He now, for ever, offers up Himself in Heaven; and His Apostles, through their successors, offer up the same Passover on earth, and they will offer it alway, even unto the end of the world. In heaven and in earth, it is but one act still, one priesthood, and one sacrifice. The Church is the upper chamber spread abroad; a sphere above this visible world, hanging over all the earth. It is in all lands, under all skies, upon

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the floods and in the mountains, in the wilderness and on trackless shores, wherever two or three are gathered together, there is the upper chamber, and the paschal table, the disciples, and the Lord of the true Passover, the Sacrifice and the Priest. At every altar He takes bread and wine, blesses, and gives His body and His blood. This whole action and event is a continuous and ever-present reality. We do not repeat or imitate, but perpetuate and continue the act which He began that last night before He suffered. And, by continuing it, we unite ourselves to Him in it. We go up into the room furnished and prepared; and are present, not more now than then, not more here than there. The kingdom of our Lord is in spirit and in truth. Our Sacrament is the true paschal sacrifice, indivisible and one.

2. And this may shew us further, that with desire He desires still to eat this sacrament of His love with us. How strangely this inverts our common ways of speaking. We look upon the holy communion as a commandment to be obeyed, or a blessing to be sought. Perhaps we may also regard it on our part as a source of strength and solace; but do we realise that it is He who is desiring to eat it with us? that the chief desire is on His side; that it is He who invites, calls, beseeches us; that He stands at the altar

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waiting and longing for our approach; and all this because of His divine love for sinners, because our sanctification is His joy? How full of all wonder is this tenderness and patience of love! That He should suffer such as we are to draw near; that He should endure to receive sinners, and to eat with them; that after our sins, backslidings, betrayals, our wilful infirmities and cold, heartless estrangements, He should at all accept of our advance, this is miraculous: but that He should desire to be touched by the hands of lepers and the lips of the unclean; that He should long for us while we stand aloof from Him; that when we draw near, His desire should be ardent and ours languid; that the joy and solace, if I dare so speak, should be more with Him than with us, and that the blessedness of that divine communion should be deeper in His heart than in ours,—all this is the mystery of love, the length and breadth and depth and height whereof pass all understanding. And yet there is somewhat we may comprehend, for His desire is like His love, divine. The infinite and unextinguishable love which brought Him from His Father's bosom to die upon the cross; the tenderness of the Good Shepherd, in whose eyes the lost are precious as His own blood; these make Him to yearn over us when our swerving, cold, slothful hearts draw near with a scanty

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and feeble desire. The greater desire is always with the more perfect; the greatest is with Him in whom no imperfection can be. And what is the source of this divine longing? Why does He desire us to eat this Passover with Him? It is because He desires our faith and love, our repentance and obedience, our presence at the paschal feast in the kingdom of God. His "delights are with the sons of men," therefore He surrounds Himself with His friends, and so fulfils His promise: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The first moving cause of this divine desire is that He may pour forth His blessings of power and grace upon us. The law of the Divine love is to overflow upon the creation of God. The eternal fountain sheds abroad its fulness on all orders of His works. His love is "the first and the last." It moved Him to create all worlds; to redeem us by the gift of Himself; to regenerate us by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. The same love moved the Word to be made flesh, and to suffer for our sins. It was the source of this strong desire on His night of agony; it is now the spring from which life, healing, cleansing, illumination, solace, strength, and bliss flow down upon His Church. When we draw near to Him at the altar, He sees our wounds, our weakness, our infirmities; He sees our needs,

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and our strong desires, and it is His joy to heal, strengthen, and save.

Let us now see in particular what are His intentions and acts of grace to all His faithful servants in this feast of redemption.

1. First, He desires to apply to us the benefits of His passion. The sacrifice upon the cross, which is of infinite worth to redeem all mankind, is made salvation unto each of us, as it is applied to us one by one. It is no more in our power to apply it to ourselves than to redeem ourselves. The application of the blood of Christ is an act of His sovereign grace. It is applied to us first in the laver of baptism; but its cleansing needs to be perpetually renewed, that the sins of our frail and evil will may be perpetually washed away. We stand before God in virtue of that one sacrifice, and by that alone. Therefore in the eating of the true Lamb of atonement, our compassionate and loving High Priest applies the sacrifice of His death for our perfect pardon. He desires to absolve us by the power of His atoning oblation, and to present us in Himself without spot unto His Father. No sinner hopes to be forgiven so as He thirsts to forgive. To pardon is even more blissful than to create. To draw us to the foot of the cross, to sprinkle us with His own divine blood, to unite us to His own sacrifice, this is His desire.

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Who, then, when He calls will go away unforgiven? who can fear to come?

2. And again, He desires to give Himself to be our spiritual food. It was His delight to give Himself in our stead; to leave His kingdom, His glory, His eternal joy, to make Himself poor, outcast, and ashamed. He humbled Himself to be a servant, to be made in the likeness of men, to obey and to die, and that upon the cross, and all for us. But as if this were not enough, He has humbled Himself to be for ever our spiritual sustenance; He comes to us, "that we may dwell in Him, and He in us." He has "compassion on the multitude," toiling onward to the heavenly country, and gives them to eat in the wilderness, lest "they faint by the way." It is His delight to work this divine miracle, not in the mountain or by the sea alone, but in all the world, and in all ages, upon every altar feeding every hungry soul with Himself. With desire He desires to see the thousands that follow throng about Him for the bread of life, and to satisfy them.

3. And lastly, He desires to make us, even now in this life, behold His love. Love pent up withers away; but Divine love cannot be straitened: it is like the light of heaven, which pours down in floods upon the earth. He is God, and God is love; and the bliss of God is to shew His

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love to all His works. As He gathered round Him the twelve and the more favoured three; as He cherished the disciple beloved above all; as He delighted to shew His love to "Martha and her sister and Lazarus;" as the trembling, the broken-hearted, and the penitent, came to Him upon earth, and He made them conscious of His compassion; so He desires us to approach Him now in the Sacrament of His death, that He may give us the inward pledges and perceptions of His love. We know how among friends the interchange of mutual love is sweet, and how they who love most have most joy in making their love felt. What we call tenderness is the desire love has to cherish its object with endearment. Dare we ascend from things of earth to things of heaven? Was it not for this that the Son of God, who was in heaven, came down to earth? What is the mystery of the Incarnation, but God loving and cherishing man with a love not alone divine, but also human? Our Redeemer is not only very God, but very man in all the truth of our humanity. And His human affections follow the laws of our perfect manhood. With desire He invites us to Himself, that He may shew to our intimate consciousness the personal love which moved Him to give Himself, with full intention, for each several soul.

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And now, from all that has been said, let us learn one great and searching truth.

Above all other motives for drawing near to the holy Sacrament of His body and blood, this is the first and chiefest: because He desires to eat this feast of love with us.

O cold and constrained hearts, who draw near only because He has commanded. O close and calculating souls, who come because it is for their advantage. Hard and perishing are they who have cause to be afraid to come; unbelieving and ungrateful, who, without cause, turn their backs upon His desire. On earth, "He was despised and rejected of men." So is He now. "And we hide, as it were, our faces from Him." He stands upbraiding with tones of love: "O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me:" "All the day long have I stretched out My hands:" "How often would I . . . . but ye would not:" "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."[1] If any dying friend, in the night of his last agony, should say, "Day by day kneel down at noon and remember me," love would constrain us to fulfil it. The known desire of one loved and departed is among the most powerful and persuasive motives.

[1] Micah vi. 3; Rom. x. 21; St. Matt. xiii. 37; St. John v. 40.

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If we should forget it for a day, we should be cut to the heart; we should reproach our unstable affections. "Out of sight, out of mind," is the world's reproof to heartless friends. How, then, shall we escape rebuke, if we neglect so fervent a desire? Blessed thought, that He is drawing us to Himself; that all His will is towards us, and all His heart set upon us, even in the midst of our faults, follies, weakness, inconstancy, and sins. What we are He knows, and yet, such as we are, He desires our fellowship, that, by communion with Him, we may be cleansed and changed; that the altar here may be a preparation and a foretaste of the marriage-supper in heaven, where, with face unveiled, He will sit down, and all His saints and all His beloved ones with Him, at the eternal Feast which shall be eaten ever new in the kingdom of God.

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SERMON XV.

WORTHY COMMUNION.

St. Matt. ix. 21.

"If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole."

THIS miracle sets before us many of the deepest realities of the life of faith. It shews us, as in a parable, the source and the manner of our spiritual healing.

This poor woman had been afflicted with a long infirmity. For twelve years she had tried all human skill; she "had spent," St. Luke says, "all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any."[1] Or, as St. Mark says, she "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."[2] When she heard of Jesus, she thought that He had power to heal; that even "His garment," "the border of His garment," if she could but touch it, would make

[1] St. Luke viii. 43. [2] St. Mark v. 26.

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her whole. She came "in the press," as if fearing her own unworthiness, and touched Him, "and was healed of that plague." And when Jesus knew that virtue had gone out of Him, she, finding that she could not be hid, came, "fearing and trembling," falling down at His feet, and "told Him all the truth."

Now we have here a remarkable example of faith bringing conscious unworthiness into the presence of our Lord. Even after she was healed, she was full of trembling fear. Before, she dared not to meet His eye, or to ask His pity; she ventured only to come "in the press behind," and to touch "the border of His garment." We may see in this a temper not uncommon among devout and lowly minds, a mixture of longing and shrinking, of desire and fear. They dare not think that they may meet the presence of our Lord, and yet they fully believe that He alone can heal them. This applies to every act of faith and devotion; but, above all, to the Sacrament of His body and blood. What is more common than the desire to communicate, mixed with the fear of communicating unworthily? How many would fain come "in the press," and yet tremble and fear. How often do such Christians ask, with anxious hearts, What is the fitness required for the holy Sacrament? and how do I know that I am not coming unworthily?

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By what tests can I try and judge myself, that I be not "judged of the Lord" at that day? Let us see, then, what this miracle will teach us.

We have here, as in a parable, this whole spiritual mystery, and the dispositions necessary to worthy communion.

1. For in the holy Sacrament our blessed Lord is as truly and personally present as He was in the midst of that great throng. As God He is present always; therefore as man He can be never absent: for in His divine person the Godhead and manhood are so united as never more to be divided. The Eternal Word is with us in the person of Jesus Christ. It is not a partial and divided, but a whole and undivided presence. The manner and the manifestation is no longer visible and local, but invisible and transcendent. As in a place, and in the proper dimensions of His personal form, He is visibly manifest in heaven; but after a divine and invisible manner the Incarnate Word is present in the new creation of God. This is true of the whole Church; but it is true, in a way peculiar to itself, of the holy Sacrament. We are too apt to conceive low and earthly notions of this divine mystery, and to suppose the presence of His body and blood to be something partial and apart from the fulness of His perfect and living presence. His body and blood can no more be

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separated from His presence than His Godhead from His manhood. But in that holy Sacrament the object of our faith is the presence of Christ, God and man, in all the reality and substance of His Godhead and His manhood. He is personally with us, under the veils of the consecrated elements, as truly, though in another manner, as He was present in the garment, the hem of which wrought miracles of healing. The holy Sacrament is not the sign of an absent person, nor a mere figure or symbol, suggesting, picturing, commemorating. In the order of nature it is sign and shadow; but in the order of grace, which is supernatural, it is substance and life.

2. And this shews us further, that when we come to the holy Sacrament, we verily and indeed touch Him. It is the form in which He offers Himself to us, thereby prolonging His presence and healing on earth. The mystery of His sacramental presence is the time appointed by Himself for our approach: it is the occasion when He suffers us to draw near, as He invited Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger." And let us not think that, for our salvation, there is any real difference whether we touch Him by the sensible touch of the hand or not. It was not the hand which drew forth the healing virtue that went out of Him, but faith, of which the hand was but the instrument.

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And we touch still by faith. Neither was it the garment which had power to work miracles, but He who bare it. Faith touched Him by the hand through the hem of His garment, as now faith touches Him under the veils of the holy Sacrament.

Let us realise this great gift of Christ, by divine faith in the order of grace; let us truly conceive the dignity of this holy mystery, its heavenly truth and power.

Is it not because we do not believe this divine work that we come so languidly and coldly to the holy Sacrament? I am not now speaking of those who come sinfully and in sacrilege; nor of those who are indeed unworthy to come; but of those who, though fearing, are yet worthy according to the measures of our sinful hearts. It may be said that they are least worthy to come who think themselves the most so; and that they are most unworthy who least feel their own unworthiness: such, for instance, as come not "in the press" and with fear, but with boldness and a confident approach, never doubting their own fitness: or such, again, as are high-minded, self-esteeming, fearless, slothful, easy, shallow, undisturbed in their self-persuading assurance. These communicants come to the altar with little or no perception of the divine reality they are approaching; their lives are lives

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of sense, and they judge of the holy Sacrament by sense and in the order of sense. They, indeed, ask no questions, having no fears; but awakened and humble hearts mistrust their own fitness, and desire some rule by which to judge themselves. If, then, to approach His sacramental presence now is all one with approaching His visible presence then; if to touch the hem of His garment was a prophetic type of the touch whereby we receive the virtue which goes out from Him in the mystery of holy communion; must we not believe that the dispositions of heart with which we should have ventured to approach Him then, are the same as those with which we should approach Him now?

Let us therefore see what they are.

1. The first disposition is a sense of our own infirmities. As a weary and lingering sickness drew this poor woman to Him on earth, so a sense of our life-long sinfulness draws us to Him now that He is in His heavenly kingdom. The first reason, therefore, why we must needs come is the reason some plead for staying away. They ask, How can I dare to come, who am so sinful? Ought they not rather to ask, How dare I, who am so sinful, stay away? what hope for me but in coming? When I say, a sense of sinfulness, I mean, not a consciousness of indulged or unrepented sins, but a consciousness of sins for which we continu-

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ally sorrow. Be they what they may, heavy and numberless: though it be an indwelling sinfulness, which spreads through the whole spiritual life, in thoughts, tempers, imaginations; making us prone to fall, and weak to arise again; though at times we seem darkened, harassed, swayed, and almost turned aside from God; yet if we be truly grieved and humbled, even these are no bar to worthy communion. Nay, a fear and a danger of falling even into mortal sin, a sense of the strength of temptation, the treachery of our own hearts, the weakness of our will, need not keep us away. The consciousness of shallow repentance, imperfect sorrow, want of love, languid affections, cold devotion, wandering prayers, sluggishness in the spiritual life, restless activity of the animal and worldly nature,—all this burden of conscious unworthiness might well make us shrink from Him, if it were not the very reason why we must needs draw near. It is but a little trial of faith to believe that Christ loves us, until we have come truly to know our own sinfulness. So long as we do not feel this inward burden, it costs little to say we believe His love. We may believe it as an intellectual truth; but we do not trust in it by the faith of the heart. When a conscious unworthiness of being loved rises up and condemns us, when our inward soul seems to contradict the possibility of

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His love to us, then to believe that He loves us still is faith. And we often find that people who have been in the habit of coming without fear to the altar while their inward convictions of sin were slight and shallow, as soon as deeper thoughts begin to stir within them, and sharper convictions to pierce their conscience—that is, when indeed they are becoming more fit to communicate than before—begin from that very time to fear and to shrink back from the holy Sacrament. Now it is just at this very point that their faith is put on trial. The grace of the holy Sacrament and the nearness of the presence of Christ has revealed to them a fuller knowledge of themselves. If His light were not in them, they would not see themselves; they would be unconscious as before. It is by shewing them what they are, that He tries their trust in His love. The more they feel their lost and sinful state, the more they need to hold fast by Him; and He reveals it for this purpose, that they may draw closer and closer to His presence. Therefore, the first condition to worthy communion is a sense of unworthiness—a trembling, self-accusing consciousness of sin, which, while it makes us fear to draw near, makes us still more afraid to stay away. It is our sin which makes us unworthy, and yet our sin is the necessity which forces us to His feet.

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2. Another disposition is a conscience clear from sin. When I say, that our sinfulness ought to bring us to the altar, I do not mean wilful sin, even of the lightest kind. Indulged or unrepented sin, howsoever small, is a direct contradiction to the spirit of our Lord. We have been speaking of the indwelling sinfulness which was in our nature at the time when He first took us, by baptism, into His mystical body. He opened between Himself and us a living relation, a channel through which His sinlessness might sanctify our sinful hearts; and, such as we are, He still holds us fast, maintaining, on His part, that relation of love unbroken. We know that as sinners we were all separated from God, and yet that by grace we have been united to Him again. We know also that some Christians by their sins separate themselves again from Him, for all sins tend to separation. "There is no man that liveth and sinneth not;" nevertheless there are some who still abide in union with God. Yet they too sin, but their sins do not separate them from Him; they are not free from sin, but their fellowship with Him still endures. And how is this to be understood? "All unrighteousness is sin," but "there is a sin not unto death." Some sins do, and some sins do not, separate the soul from God. All have the sinfulness of sin, but all are not alike.

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There was sin in Judas: St. James and St. John were not sinless; yet these were in perpetual communion with their Lord; while the traitor, even at the last supper, was already cut off from His fellowship. This shews us the distinction between venial and mortal sins; that is, between those sins which do, and those which do not, separate the soul from God. Such sins need deep repentance, yet they do not separate true but failing hearts from their Redeemer's grace and love.

When I say, then, a conscience clear from sin, I mean, clear from the memory of sins unrepented, and from the presence of sins still indulged. An example, perhaps, may make this plainer. Suppose two friends, one gentle and forgiving, the other smouldering with anger. They may live together and converse, they may exchange outward tokens of affection, but they have no communion. There is in the one a spirit which suspends all fellowship of soul. Light and darkness, harmonies and discords, can as little blend as their sympathies and tempers. Or, to take an example in our own minds. We know how any irritation or evil thought clouds and casts out all holy love, aspiration, and desire. So long as it lasts, it possesses the whole soul, and all higher affections are banished. They are mutually destructive: they cannot co-exist. We are at variance with our-

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selves; between our better and our worse self there is a direct contradiction. So it is in the communion of Christ with us. A mind that is proud, selfish, or angry, directly repels the mind of our Lord. Would this trembling woman have dared to draw near and touch even the hem of His garment, harbouring in her heart a consciousness of wilful sin? Her very faith, which taught her that there was in Him a power mighty to heal, would have taught her that there was in Him also a power mighty to punish. Her faith was not more strong than pure. So when we draw near and touch Him in that holy Sacrament, we must take heed that there be not in us any thing at variance with His character and spirit; that His love, purity, gentleness, humility, truthfulness, may find in us no contradictions, no provocations, no antagonists; that is, no wilful cherishing of a spirit at variance with His own. There will be, alas, in all of us the remainders and the inclinations out of which these provocations spring; but if they are not indulged, if they are striven against and lamented, they are our sicknesses and our afflictions; our wounds which moved His pity to die for us, to unite us to His own life-giving body, and still to dwell among us by a perpetual presence, that we may touch Him and be healed.

3. We will take one more disposition of worthy

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communion, and that is, a sincere desire of perpetual union with Him. If we may venture to use an earthly example, we may consider how the presence of any wise and holy friend subdues the worse and sustains the better part of our character. We know how variously we are tempted by various persons: how with some we have no restraint, with others we are ever on our guard; how some provoke our faults, and others seem to lay a spell upon them; their society raises us above ourselves, awakens better desires, higher aspirations, worthier motives; their tone of voice, their look, their bearing, allure and win us from ourselves. So long as we are with them, we seem better men, nearer to God's kingdom, freer from temptation, stronger to control ourselves. And this may in some faint way express the power of Christ's presence upon our hearts. So long as we hold by Him and He by us, our inward sinfulness dies down and disappears. Earthly desires, inclinations, and thoughts seem cast out as a possession. So long as the eye of our consciousness is fixed upon Him, His light pours in upon us. The whole of our mind seems to be cleared of every shadow, and to be filled with the brightness of His presence, with light, love, and a holy will. We feel that if He were ever with us, if we could be ever with Him, ever touching Him, we should draw into our souls

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perpetual virtues of sanctity and strength. It seems to us as if we could never sin again, never see sin in any other light than the light of His presence, never again care for the world, or hanker after life, or faint in loving Him. It seems at the time as if we were in very deed "bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh," spirit of His spirit, mind of His mind, heart of His heart, will of His will; as if He held us in our whole nature to Himself, uniting us to His divine person, "that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood," that, by an ineffable union and intermingling of His very self with ours, "we dwell in Him, and He in us."

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SERMON XVI.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

St. John xiii. 23.

"There was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved."

WHAT name is more blessed than this title by which St. John conceals himself? Who was ever more favoured than he? It was a sweet memory in his old and solitary age, to remember that night of awe, in which he lay upon the bosom of his Lord. What was all that he had ever suffered, long years of toil and weariness, with contradiction and persecution, bondage, and a martyrdom of will, to the consciousness of his Master's love? And yet it was doubtless for some deeper reason that the evangelist wrote these words. It was not to publish abroad his own peculiar favours, nor to prefer himself to others in his Master's presence. He had long since unlearned to seek "the right hand" or "the left" in His kingdom. It was

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perhaps to give warrant to the certainty of his written testimony; but it was surely to reveal also the deep and divine mysteries of love which lie hid in the incarnation of the Eternal Word.

This was indeed a great and wonderful sight. God taking man into His bosom—a man leaning upon the bosom of God. As the words of our Lord were miracles, and His miracles words of grace, revealing ministries of His spiritual power, so we may find in this, as in all His acts, a significant and symbolical character. Let us see what may be implied in it.

1. First, we here see, as by a parable, the love of the Son of God in the mystery of His own incarnation. He, being God, took our nature upon Him; "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God." In His person, one and indivisible, the two natures are united. Our infirmity leans upon His might, our manhood upon His Godhead. In Him it is sinless and divine. And now in the bosom of the Father, "above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," the man Christ Jesus is exalted. There is a man in the bosom of God. Our nature is in glory. As we say at the altar, in the end of our Christian sacrifice, "For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord,

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Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

2. But, again, we may see here His love in the salvation of His elect. When He took our manhood into God, it was that He might take us also unto Himself. The glorious Body of the Word made flesh is the centre of His mystical body, and to it He joins us one by one. We who were by nature dead in trespasses and sin, outcasts, and without God in the world, He gathers together from all ages and all lands unto Himself. The Word made flesh, though in visible presence revealed always in heaven alone, is always present upon earth, and He has been perpetually, and by manifold ways, gathering His elect into His bosom. They who, from righteous Abel until the hour of His passion, had departed in His love, waited in the world beyond the grave until He should break up the unseen gates of hell, and go before them into the paradise of God. Those who have since that day believed on Him, through the words of apostles, the writings of evangelists, the witness of His Church, the inspirations of His grace, the sacraments of His love, He has gathered in from the world into His visible fold, and within the visible circuit of His presence, ever nearer and nearer to Himself.

What mean His own words? "Come unto Me,

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all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" and again, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out:" what are these but invitations to come and to share the rest and the portion of St. John?

What, for instance, is the state of those blessed servants, who, from their regeneration, have been kept from falling into sins which separate the soul from His presence? Of such St. John is an especial type, in his love, pureness, and perseverance. They have a calm, undoubting, unfearing confidence in the love and care of Christ; a quiet content and still strength, which others seldom attain. Such people have few cravings, no eagerness, a satisfied desire, and a restful spirit. The world thinks them languid and slow of heart; but their stillness is the surface of a depth, and their slowness the calm of an intense perception of their Master's love. They have no need of stirs and excitements, of strong words and vehement impulses; there is within them a vivid consciousness of love kindled from the bosom of their Lord, and returning to Him again.

And so too, though in another manner, with penitents. It is not without meaning that, after He rose from the dead, He shewed Himself first, not to the disciple who leaned upon His bosom, but to the sinner who had washed His feet with

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tears. And she who first would but anoint His feet, was afterwards made bolder by His compassion, even to anoint His head. It is a divine seal upon the Gospel, that the special parables of love are the penitent son and the lost sheep. It is for them He seems to lay up all His tenderness—for the weak and the wounded, the famished and desolate. The father falls upon the neck of the returning wanderer: the shepherd carries the lost sheep upon his shoulder. What are all these to teach us, but the divine tenderness of our Lord to penitents? After years of wayward and wilful disobedience, of headstrong and guilty provocation, of sullen and stubborn rebellion, when at the last they turn, He will embrace them in perfect love. They, too, know the calm and rest of His intimate presence. Their past life seems to have hurried by them like the riot of a tempest, or to be dispelled as the anguish of a frightful dream. They know what they have been, its horror and its peril, its iron bondage and its stifling misery. It is still so near, real, and vivid, that it affrights them to gaze upon it; but they have a consciousness that they are safe. An almighty power hangs between them and the past; there is a fence about them which nothing can break through; they are in a presence within which no evil can force its way.

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There they have found peace at last, a consciousness of inexhaustible compassion, a taste of everlasting love.

But there are others who may be truly said to share the portion of St. John; I mean, the afflicted, whose afflictions are sanctified. The solitary and the sorrowing find there an unearthly rest: they carry their griefs and lay them on the bosom of the Man of Sorrows. He bears both the mourner and his burden, and in the depths of His presence shews him the interpretation of his affliction. In the Heart of His divine sorrow all stands revealed. We laid on Him the necessity of sorrow, and He changed our penalty into our purification. He became the chief among the sons of affliction, that He might found an order of mourners, to be His own especial followers and friends. It is by sorrow that they are enrolled in the company of His truest servants, and in the nearest approaches to Himself. And the signs of this approach are, patience, rest, and consent in all our crosses, by a will conformed to His.

To take one more example. What is communion with Him in the Sacrament of His body and blood, but a leaning on His bosom in especial nearness? All His mystical body, in heaven and in earth, all devout and holy souls who have been united to Him in habitual fellowship of spiritual

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and sacramental communion,—they, too, are numbered with the disciple whom Jesus loved. None know but they what passes between them and their Lord in hours of prayer, in silent adoration, in secret oratories, in lonely chambers, in the sanctuary and before the altar. Some have seemed to speak with Him as if He were unveiled—as if He stood visibly before them, and they were lightened by His presence: their whole soul has seemed to be united with Him, as light is one with its centre; and their whole being to forsake this world, and cleave to Him alone. It is good for us to know these things, that we may be awakened to a sense of their reality, and ashamed to live on unconscious of them: but they are too great and excellent for most of us; far above, out of our reach: not by His will, but through our earthliness. Yet we must not leave them unheeded, lest they should be disbelieved, and therefore never sought; but we must speak of them with fear, lest we be presumptuous or unreal, knowing what we are.

The nearest approach, then, to the grace vouchsafed at the Last Supper to the disciple whom Jesus loved, is to be sought in the holy Sacrament which He then ordained. Was it to give us also a visible type of the gift which He then bestowed upon us, that He shewed this signal token of His

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love? Did it not seem to say, "This sacrifice of Myself shall be with you for ever: this Sacrament of My love shall never fail until I come again; and whensoever ye shall do this for My love's sake, I will receive all lowly, loving souls to rest in Me?"

All these may be said to lean on Him who is their only strength, hope, and solace. In the midst of all sorrows, trials, and temptations, they are at peace; in all the unrest of this tumultuous and weary world, they rest on Him. They who have walked steadfast with Him from childhood, and live on unconscious of this rough outer life which beats upon the penitent; penitents who, after long wanderings past, find the peace and bliss of an eternal absolution; mourners who feel no more the burden of the cross, while He bears up both it and them; and all who with ardent desire yearn for the coming of His kingdom, and are stayed with "white raiment" and a sense of His ever-present love. The one great gift that all alike enjoy, is a sense of repose, a placid calm of heart, a stay upon which they lean with all the weight of their whole spiritual life. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

Let us, then, seek this, so far as we may dare to approach Him. But how may we hope to share it?

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1. By knowing our own unworthiness even to sit down with Him at His table. It is no good sign to talk, as some do, with a bold familiarity of fellowship with Him, or to be forward to cast ourselves where the beloved disciple lay. Let us not "seek high things" for ourselves, the right hand and the left hand in His presence; we know not what we ask, and, not knowing, we ask amiss. To be unconscious of our unworthiness is to be blind or proud; and pride loses all. The lowest place is too high for us; to sit at His feet, or to gather up the crumbs under His table, is too great a boon: we must begin by taking the lowest room, that He may say unto us, "Go up higher;" lest our boldness meet a check, and He bid us give place to humbler and worthier guests. They are often nearest who think themselves farthest off; who say, not "I am ready to go with Thee to prison or to death," but "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof:" or with a guarded appeal, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." It is not for us to choose our place, except at the foot of the cross. That place is ours, for He has given it to us. Thither let us carry our sins, day by day, and there we shall see them as they are. There we shall learn the true sinfulness of sin, and the true character of our own life and heart. There are no illusions in the light of the cross; all the

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colours and shadows, the false play and changeful hues, the gloss and the glitter which we put upon ourselves in the sight of the world, and even in the light of our own conscience, are there overwhelmed by the direct and all-revealing splendour of His presence. He will not take to His intimate communion those who seem to themselves the fairest, but those who humbly seek to know the worst of their own hearts. Too deeply conscious of our sinfulness we cannot be. People often misinterpret this humbling consciousness. They are tempted to think that, because they feel themselves to be more sinful than before, therefore they are so. But it is mostly the direct reverse. They are, at the worst, what they always were; but they now feel what they never felt before. The change is not in their state, but in their sense of it. And that change of consciousness is a proof that if they are not what they were, it is not for the worse, but for the better. What once they so little sorrowed for or hated, that they did not even perceive it to be evil, they now in hatred and sorrow perceive with the keenest sense. And who is with them teaching them this knowledge? Sin hides itself. God alone reveals it. It is the nearness of His presence which wakes to life this alarming consciousness. "Whatsoever maketh manifest is light." The more unworthy we feel our-

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selves to seek fellowship with Him, the nearer He is to us. This very fear is the pledge of His presence: let us not shrink from it, but seek it; let it not affright us, but draw us nearer to our help.

2. Above all, we shall attain such place as He sees fit to give us, by trusting His miraculous love. Who was it that lay in His bosom? Not the disciple who loved Jesus, but "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It was not the love of the servant which obtained that place, but the love of the Master gave it. So must it ever be. His love is "first and last." It is boundless and incomprehensible; surpassing nature, as His divine manhood is above ours; exceeding all measure, as His Godhead is above His manhood. It is an object of faith, as the mystery of the Incarnation. To doubt of His love to us, all sinners as we are, is to slight Him. It is to say, "Thou art an austere man." It is as if a child should cower and shrink in his father's sight; as if he should shun him and stand aloof, mistrusting the free, generous, self-forgetting affections of parental love. And these doubts of our Divine Master's love only darken and chill our own hearts; they overcloud the clear perceptions of His perfect character, and turn our own affections into coldness. His pity is no matter for bare intellect or reasoning, but for faith. As Peter went down to Him upon the water, simply

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trusting in His power, so must we draw near to Him in our sins, simply trusting in His love. Let us go to Him as sinners, leaving the rest to Him. If we may, to stand behind Him weeping is enough. Let us leave all deeper, higher things for those whom He shall choose. In a little time, it may be, through His tender, forgiving love, we shall have a share in their blissful rest. In a few short years, after a few more sorrows, a few more seasons of buffeting and weariness, after a few more fasts and prayers, a few more weak strivings, a few more longing communions, we shall sleep in Him, with all those who lean—not now on Abraham's bosom, in the rest of God—but on Him, the Word made flesh, in whom patriarchs, prophets, and all saints find refreshment. They lean upon Him in paradise, waiting for the day when our frail humanity shall be raised excellent in strength, and we shall be united to Him in peace and rest, sinless and deathless, in the glory of His Father.

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SERMON XVII.

THE UNITY OF LOVE.

St. Matt. xxii. 37-40.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

BY these words our Lord teaches us the unity of the kingdom of God.

All the commandments of the Law, written in ten divine precepts on two tables of stone, expounded by an inspired lawgiver, and recorded in sacred books; all the precepts and commands of God's prophets, the greater and the less, and of all whose names and words pass before us in the history of Israel;—all this manifold body of divine injunctions for the government of man and for the worship of God, run up at last into these two

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simple and divine precepts: to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

For these two commandments have the same end and scope as all the law of Moses and all the words of the prophets; they contain the whole motive of universal obedience.

And these two commandments in turn run up into a higher unity. For love is one and indivisible, a principle and gift of God. In these two commandments it is parted, indeed, into two heads, as two rays of light issuing from a common fount: two only in direction and relation, one altogether by an absolute unity of origin and nature.

Let us see, then, how this manifold scheme of divine commands and of universal obedience has, at last, but one principle and law.

And first, because "God is love." There is a divine depth in these words. They not only mean that God is loving, as when we say that He is wise or merciful, but that Love is God. For all that is in God is God. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are not three names, but three Persons. Paternity, Filiation, and Procession is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. The Intelligence of God is His very Being; so also His Love, for God is a pure and perfect energy of love and knowledge.

He said of Himself, "I am that I am." And

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our blessed Lord says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." He means not only, "I will quicken and raise mankind from the dead," but "I *am* the Resurrection, and all rise in Me: I *am* 'the Life,' and all live in Me." So the Eternal Love is the Eternal God.

And further, God's love is God's law. From all eternity He dwelt in His everlasting rest; not solitary, though with no like or second; for there are not two uncreated, nor two eternals: not alone, though in perfect oneness; for in one Godhead dwelt the ever-blessed Three in mutual love and bliss; the Father in the Son, the Father and the Son in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost proceeding from both, dwelling in the Father and the Son, being the love of the Father and of the Son, the bond of the eternal Three.

So dwelt the Eternal in His everlasting rest, until the uncreated Love, unmoved of any,—for there was none other,—moved only by Himself, began to create, that is, to give life of His life, and to inscribe the law of love upon the creatures of His will. Therefore He created "the heavens . . . and all the host of them;"[1] that is, holy angels, spirits of love and spirits of knowledge, and all the companies of the heavenly kingdom; thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; and sur-

[1] Gen. ii. 1.

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rounded Himself with an hierarchy of blessed intelligences. These dwell in the depths of the inaccessible light, in the folds of the eternal love, loving, adoring, and ministering; and the law of their Creator is the law of their existence. They love God with all their strength, with all the energy of angelic natures; they love each other as themselves, with a perfect equality of pure and heavenly love. They are filled with the light of God's countenance, and they cleave to Him with a perfect adherence of their whole being. They are united in a mutual joy, and their delight is in the depth of an universal bliss. Such is the unity of God's law in His eternal kingdom.

And that same love moved Him further to create the earth, and mankind upon the face of it. Man was made to love his Maker and his kind. God, in like manner, impressed on him this same law as the law also of his being. When man sinned against God, love moved Him again to redeem the world. God gave the Son of His love to be made man: the Son gave Himself to die. He gave also His Spirit to dwell in His redeemed. The whole work of the Spirit upon earth is a work of love, "gathering together in one the children of God which are scattered abroad," bringing them back once more to the unity of the heavenly kingdom. There is a throne in heaven, and above it

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is the glory of the ever-blessed Three; and in the midst of the throne is the Word made flesh; and round about the throne, saints for whom He died; and round about the saints, angels who never were redeemed. And all that heavenly fellowship is ruled by this same one law: all are united by love to the King of saints, all are united to each other. Their whole being cleaves to Him. Every one loves the other as himself; the outermost in that blessed company loves the innermost with a love more perfect as each is nearer to the uncreated Love, and more beloved by Him.

And this law holds not in heaven alone, but also upon earth; for we "are come," now in this present life, "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."[1] What is this but the company of heavenly hosts, at unity in itself? All the faithful upon earth, all believing, hoping, loving, penitent hearts in all lands, are gathered by this one law into the unity of the mystical body, and "grow up into Him . . . which is the Head."[2] The laws of the city of God run down to us. The unity of the heavenly Jerusalem is the source of the unity of the visible Church. It is one on earth, because it is one in heaven. It is one in heaven and earth, because it is united

[1] Heb. xii. 22.

[2] Eph. iv. 15.

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in one law.[1] Love is one of the names of Christ, and of His Church. Its visible body is the earthly clothing, the mystical impersonation of the love of God, in which all, whether visible or invisible, are united to Him as the Father is in the Son. The unity of love is a type of the unity of nature. Our Divine Redeemer prayed "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them;"—what glory, but the glory of love and unity?—"that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."[2]

1. Let us learn, then, from this great mystery of life, that a soul without love is dead: for a soul without love is a soul without God; and as God is love, so is He life. By nature we were born dead in sin, because without love to God;

[1] "Quæ est civitas Dei, nisi sancta Ecclesia? Homines enim amantes se invicem, et amantes Deum suum, qui in illis habitat, faciunt civitatem Deo. Quia lege quadam civitas continetur, lex ipsa eorum, caritas est, et ipsa caritas, Deus est."—*S. Aug. Enarr. in Psalm.* xcviii. 4.

[2] St. John xvii. 21-23.

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but in baptism God gave us a capacity to love Him, an infused and passive habit, making us capable of love. Fallen spirits have lost this capacity, angels possess it in perfection. The regenerate receive it again in a passive disposition by the gift of the Holy Ghost. But that which is passively received must be actively unfolded. A capacity is not an active habit. The spiritual capacities of our regenerate nature, such as faith, hope, and love, are powers subject to the will, and depending on the will for their development into energy and act. But the soul in which the regenerate life is quenched or stifled has no love, and for lack of love is dead. It is parted from God by all the severance of moral and spiritual contradiction. It is cast out of the kingdom of love. As Adam, when he was driven forth out of Eden, had no more any lot in paradise, so the unloving soul is parted from God and Christ, from holy angels and from all saints, both in heaven and earth. Though all the companies of heaven are about him, he is solitary; for a loveless soul has no fellow. He has no inheritance in the city of God, no sympathy in the fellowship of the redeemed. They are united by love, and in that unity the unloving cannot abide. By love the souls of the faithful hang upon God, as the Psalmist says, "It is good for me to hold me fast by God;"

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"my soul hangeth upon Thee."[1] The soul that does not love looses its hold, and falls from the Divine Presence. As it recedes from God, it loses the light of His countenance. It for ever falls lower and lower; becomes darker and darker; grows colder and colder. First it falls under the dominion of self, next under the power of Satan; then it is bound over into the throng and thraldom of fallen angels. Take any example we will, and we shall find it always true: for instance, pride, anger, sullen jealousy, or a stubborn will; these sins drive the Spirit of God away. So, again, love of the world most surely makes men fall from Him: for "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Sloth also, and pampering of self, wastes away the soul; it brings on fearful departures, and great losses of God's gifts and presence. What are all the tokens and ministries of grace to slothful hearts? They read holy Scripture, but it is a bare letter; they see the surface of the page, but not the light which lies beneath. Though they are sometimes moved with its sublimity and beauty, its power and pathos, yet it is only in the sensitive will and by the animal emotions. Feeling is not love; and with all this seeming religion, the spiritual life of such souls towards God is cold and dark. The same

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 27; lxiii. 9.

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is true of their prayers, which are estranged and formal; and still more of their communions. An unloving heart before the altar is a sight of fear. All is empty, without form and void; and darkness is upon the face of it; but the Spirit of God does not move upon the face of those waters. Plain truths of the Spirit to such cold hearts are parables; parables are incomprehensible; mysteries have no significance, sacraments no meaning. All is darkness or formality, a hollow, heartless custom. Such a soul is truly and deeply parted from Christ, and under the apostolic sentence: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha."

And if such be the state of loveless Christians in this life, what shall it be in the life to come? Shall they be near God there, who are far from Him here? Shall they be united to Him in eternity, who have cut themselves off from Him now in time? The separation which now is, shall then bring the doom of eternal loss. From the coldness and darkness of a loveless life, they fall still further from God into "the outer darkness." As the sight of God to them that love Him is the blessedness of heaven, so the loss of the beatific vision is the nethermost hell. Even in this life it begins to veil itself from unloving souls, but there they must be cast out from before His face for

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ever. And why is the lack of love so heinous in guilt, and a sin so fearfully avenged? Because a soul without love rebels against the whole law of God. As "love is the fulfilling of the law," so not to love is to break all the commandments at a blow.

2. And we may hence also learn, that the least beginning of love in the soul is the seed of eternal life. As the least spark has the whole nature of fire, its intense heat and its perfect brightness, so the least pulse of love has in it, by virtue and principle, the whole nature of perfect love. There is no measure of ardent charity to which it may not be kindled. The love of the highest saint in the kingdom of heaven, where love is the law of order and exaltation, was once a faint beat, a weak motion of the soul. The fervent and active devotion of prophets and apostles was once but an infused capacity of spiritual life. So it may be with you. As the greatest have once been among the least, so the least may one day be among the greatest. The germ of a perfect love which shall adhere to the beatific vision in perpetual adoration, is, by God's gift, in every regenerate soul. As we will, so we shall live; and as we live, so we shall love. It is our life, the activity and direction of our living powers, that unfolds and perfects this divine capacity. And as love is a principle indivisible in

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its nature, so it is in its working and expansion. This shews us what is the law of its growth and development. The love of God, which has its centre in His eternal Being, spreads itself abroad with an even, all-embracing, universal fulness. All created beings are encompassed within the circles of its expanse; every sphere is replenished by it; heaven and earth are enfolded in its circuits; all in its own measure and degree, without disturbance or inequality. So with the love which He implants in His elect. As a spark swells into flame, and as its spire of light ascends, expands into a body of fire, full, even, and continuous, enlarging its reach and presence, ever moving outwards on all sides, yet ever flowing together in one equable symmetry and outline, preserving always its perfect unity; so love, which begins in the soul, at once moves upward and outward, to God and to our neighbour; growing with an even, simultaneous expansion; encircling first our kindred in blood, then our kindred in the spirit,—first father and mother, brethren and sisters, then neighbours and friends, members and servants of Christ, strangers and enemies; always ascending towards God, drawing the soul upward to His presence; uniting it to the person of our Redeemer, and through Him to all His elect. Love has no law but God's love. As He loves, so must we. They are the

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chiefest objects of our love who are the chiefest objects of His. All the love of His heavenly court is the reflection and response of His own. In the heavenly country they love even now as He loves: every one in his own order, in the measure of service, nearness, likeness, kindred to the King of saints. And to us wayfarers still on earth, there is no other law than that which descends from the eternal kingdom. "As He is, so are we in this world."

3. And from this we may learn one more truth, that the unity and expansion of love is the cause and the law of unity and communion to the visible Church. This unity had its beginning upon earth in Him who is Love incarnate; from Him it spread and embraced His disciples, binding them in one visible fellowship, to which He imparted His divine commission. When He ascended into heaven, love was shed abroad in fulness by the coming of the Holy Ghost. The Love of the Father and of the Son was thenceforward manifest, not in a natural, but in a mystical body, which, from age to age, perfects itself by the inward working of its own principle of life. Its unity and growth are properties of its very being, descending from "the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,

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according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."[1] It is, therefore, by its very nature and law, one and indivisible, ever enlarging, all-embracing; gathering in all nations, fusing all races, harmonising all tongues, blending all thoughts, uniting all spirits: making the earth once more of "one lip," of one speech, of one heart, and of one will. All the order of the Church; the spiritual relations of fatherhood and sonship, of brotherhood and mutual service; the communion of all grace and gifts, of sacraments and sympathies—all this is either the effect or the bond of an indivisible life. "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism,"[2] one altar, one holy sacrifice, one divine tradition of corporate identity and living consciousness, sustaining the illumination of truth, seen by love alone, and itself sustained by the Holy Ghost. Therefore are all the members of Christ united in one visible family under "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."[3]

Hence comes the sinfulness of schism: it is a sin against the indivisible love of God. To separate from the Church is to forfeit love; for

[1] Eph. iv. 15, 16. [2] Ibid. 4, 5. [3] Ibid. 6.

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love cannot be divided. Schisms do not rend it, but are rent from it.[1] As the life retires into the living trunk when branches are cut away, so love still dwells undivided in the life of the Church when members fall from its communion.

And this shews also the sinfulness of an unloving spirit within the visible fold of the Church. I am not speaking only of strife, malice, and contention, but of the likes and dislikes, the estrangements and differences, by which the equable and calm spirit of love is grieved within the communion of the Church. We could as easily divide the daylight, and give to it uncertain and capricious inclinations, as divide the love which God implants by partialities and unequal distributions. As the sight of the eye, though intently fixed on one object out of all, yet embraces the whole visible horizon; so divine love in the soul, though it be fixed with all its force on God alone, yet embraces all around. Its very nature is expansion. It cannot exclude: to exclude any, is to destroy itself.

[1] "Erat ibi tunica, dicit Evangelista, desuper texta. Ergo de cœlo, ergo a Patre, ergo a Spiritu Sancto. Quæ est ista tunica, nisi caritas, quam nemo potest dividere? Quæ est ista tunica, nisi unitas? In ipsam sors mittitur, nemo illam dividit. Sacramenta sibi hæretici dividere potuerunt, caritatem non diviserunt. Et quia dividere non potuerunt, recesserunt: illa autem manet integra."—*S. Aug. in Psalm.* xxi. *Enarr.* ii. 19.

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Where love is at all, it will act always and every where, towards all persons, and under all circumstances of advantage or disadvantage, help or hindrance, at home or abroad. It is the very life of the soul. We could as well live by fragments, as love by partialities. Love can no more vary and change, come and go, single out one and slight others, be fervent afar off and cold at home, than life can exist by freaks and caprices towards this person or that, in this or that place, at this or that season. As our life pervades our whole nature, in body, soul, and spirit, all our actions and movements, all our thoughts and words; so love is the one ever-present, ever-active, informing, sustaining, quickening life which orders our whole spiritual being. If we love God, we shall love our neighbour. "He that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." If we love not our neighbour, we love not God: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"[1] If we think to love one and hate another, we deceive ourselves; for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:" a heart that can hate even one soul, can love no one. If we love them that love us, "sinners also love those that love them." No

[1] 1 St. John iv. 20.

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man can truly love God who does not love his friends; no man can truly love his friends who loves not strangers; and no one can love distant or indifferent persons who does not love his enemies.

And this will give us a test which enters into our every-day life, our inmost heart and home. The first step in the ascent of love rises in our own dwelling. From our very threshold it goes up to the eternal throne. There too is "the house of God," and there "the gate of heaven." A heart unloving among kindred has no love towards God's saints and angels. If we have a cold heart towards a servant, or a friend, why should we wonder if we have no fervour towards God? Let us not deceive ourselves. It is very sweet and flattering to self to imagine ourselves in great works of devotion and charity; living at the foot of the cross, content with scanty fare and raiment, and the love of Christ alone: but if we are cold in our private prayers, we should be earthly and dull in the most devout religious order; if we shrink from the sick-bed of a servant, we should have no charity to turn the pallet of Christ's poor; if we cannot bear the vexations of a companion, how should we bear the contradiction of sinners? if a little pain overcomes us, how could we endure a cross? if we have no tender, cheerful, affectionate love to those with whom our daily

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hours are spent, how should we feel the pulse and ardour of love to the unknown and the evil, the ungrateful and repulsive? In all this we should be simply deceiving our own souls. What we are in one place, we should be everywhere; as uncertain and fastidious, as sensitive and capricious, as full of likings and dislikings, which are the leprosy of the heart, fretting its life away.

The law of love had its perfect and uniform fulfilment in our blessed Lord, who is both man and God. In His words and works, His tones and accents, His calmness and majesty, His gaze and countenance, His obedience and patience towards all who loved or hated, served or thwarted, blessed or reviled Him; in all things, great and small, in all seasons of peace or agony, His love neither failed nor fainted. It was never chilled nor clouded: no ear ever heard His voice sharpened, no eye ever saw His brow grow dark.

And how shall we fulfil this great law of two precepts, but by likeness to His Heart of love? and how shall we be likened to it, but by union with Himself?

He shews us the perfection of divine charity: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The perfection of love is sacrifice; the beginning of sacrifice is self-denial. "He pleased not Himself." He loved

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us, and gave Himself for us. He loved us even more than Himself. Let us pray Him to unite us to His own spirit, that His love may flow down into our hearts, and make us as He is. It is by spiritual contact and communion with Him that love is kindled; and the oftener we come to this fountain of heavenly fire, the more we shall be inflamed, and "His love perfected in us," until that day when, from this jarring and conflicting world, the Eternal Love shall gather in His own to that unity where there is no variance, to that communion which shall be for ever visible and one. In that world of light and peace all shall be loving, all beloved, all blessed in themselves, and doubly blessed, each in the other's bliss, in the pure sphere of joy where Love uncreated dwells, of whose boundless overflow all created life shall be filled eternally.

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SERMON XVIII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

Rev. xiv. 1.

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads."

THREE times this great vision was revealed to St. John. "And I heard," he writes, "the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand."[1] "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."[2]

Again St. John writes: "I saw as it were a

[1] Rev. vii. 4. [2] Ibid. 9, 10.

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sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."[1]

And in this place: "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads."[2]

This is a revelation of things which shall be hereafter; an anticipation of the perfect fulfilment of the secret mystery of grace now advancing in the world.

This blessed company seen upon mount Sion is the whole Church as it shall be, "without spot or blemish," gathered and glorious: the Head and the Body, the whole mystical Person of the Second Adam, the beginning and the fulness of the new creation of God.

The hundred and forty and four thousand is a number divinely chosen to express the multitude of God's elect, as they are foreknown in the Book of Life; a number which stands as a symbol for

[1] Rev. xv. 2, 3. [2] Ibid. xiv. 1.

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a number unrevealed, as the stars of the heavens for multitude: the fellowship of all saints, from all ages and generations, of all families, races, and tongues.

It reveals also the perfect unity of the whole mystical body. They were arrayed all alike, bearing each the palm of victors and their harps of praise, symbols of the divine ineffable unity of all God's saints. They chanted before the throne a new song, which no man but they could learn; and their voice went up all one, as the mingled voice of many waters.

We have here the multitude and the unity of the saints of God. Though beyond all number, they were but one; having one bliss, one crown, one eternal energy of love and worship. This reveals to us the great mystery we confess in the Catholic faith: "I believe the Communion of Saints." Let us look into it awhile.

1. First, then, the Communion of Saints is the restoration of fellowship between God and man.

God and man were united in the first creation as the substance and the shadow, the type and the likeness, the very and true original with its image and reflection. There was an unity of love and will between the Lord as He walked in Paradise, and the man whom He had made from the dust to dress the garden of Eden.

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But there was no union of the divine and human substance: neither was God man, nor man God; but God and man were each several and apart. The finite and the infinite, the created and the uncreated, were joined in no personal unity. The communion of God with man was external and perishable, hanging on the frailty of an infirm, created will.

Sin dissolved that fellowship, and the creature fell into corruption. The will of God and the will in man were turned in variance, with the energy of direct contradiction. The whole soul of man rose in rebellion against God, and the whole majesty of God stood in array against the sin of His creature. And in this original revolt the race of man fell off from God, and gathered itself against Him. The multiplication of mankind was the multiplication and perpetuity of the conflict between God and man. There was no fellowship between heaven and earth; for the divine foundation had been broken up, and no new foundation had been laid.

God, therefore, sent His Son into the world; "God was manifest in the flesh." God and man were united in one inseparable mystery; two whole and perfect natures in one person—the divine and human, the created and the uncreated—never to be again divided, never to be dissolved for ever; as a foundation of eternal communion.

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There are in the will and work of God three perfect and eternal unities: the unity of three Persons in one nature; the unity of two natures in one Person; and the unity of the Incarnate Son with His elect,—the Head with the members of His Body mystical.

This is the foundation of the communion of God and man. "A Lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand."

2. And next, the Communion of Saints is the restoration of the fellowship of men with each other. It is the mutual and universal fellowship of those who have fellowship through Christ with God.

Sin, which dissolved the communion of mankind with God, dissolved also the fellowship of man with man. The will once turned against its divine Lord is turned also against all its like. The will in man, by its selfish intensity, turns every way, with the vehemence of a tempest.

And therefore, by nature, we are isolated and isolating. Sin begets self-love; self-love destroys sympathy. Cain is the very type of our fallen race: bound by kindred, but without affections; herding together, but without a common soul: "Am I my brother's keeper?"[1] By our first birth into

[1] Gen. iv. 9.

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this world we have a common heritage of flesh and blood; but no communion, because no spiritual life: we have a common portion of death and sin; but no fellowship, because no head or centre. By nature we may unite in bonds of kindred, and in a material life of social order; but we can have no communion of spirit with spirit and of soul with soul. No imperfect person could unite us, or be our head. Every individual will born into this world is several and selfish, and therefore in conflict and division.

Such is the natural state of man on earth; such are fallen angels, for whom is no Redeemer; and such will be the misery of hell,—the perfection of conscious isolation, banishment from God, and estrangement from universal being, loneliness in a throng, multitude without unity, discord and strife, sin carried out to its perfection; individual wills absolute in solitude, hateful, and hating one another. This is the nethermost hell.

Such, then, are we by nature, and such is the eternity to which the impenitent are doomed.

But, by the power of God, through the Incarnation of His Son, we are redeemed from our natural isolation, and, by union with Him, united to each other.

Our regeneration unites us to the Divine Person in whom God and man are one; and by union

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with Him we are reunited to all whom He has likewise united to Himself. All the regenerate are partakers of one nature, the divine manhood of the Son of God, who, as God, is consubstantial with the Father; as man, is consubstantial with us. We are one with Him, as He is with His Father. As He is united with the Father, not by mere unity of likeness, or love, or will, but by a true participation of His Father's nature, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;" so are we united with Him, not by mere unity of likeness, love, or will, but by a true participation of His divine humanity. And as we are united with Him, so with each other; not by mere moral affinity or intellectual agreement, nor by mere likeness of character or harmony of disposition; not by an outward figurative union, which changes communion into a play of the imagination, or a metaphor of unsubstantial notions. The members of Christ's body, both in heaven and earth, are united in a kindred as real as the bonds of blood, but higher than all earthly brotherhood, by a participation of one common nature, of a restored humanity, sinless and deathless, in the Person of the Second Adam. As the head and the body are of one substance, so are Christ and His saints. As the vine has one nature in root and stem, branch and spray, fibre and fruit, so the mystical and true

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Vine in earth and heaven has one substance and one life, which is the basis of all fellowship in love and will, in sympathy and action, in mutual intercessions of prayer, and in united ministries of power.

All, then, who have communion in His visible Church, the evil and the good, the saint and the hypocrite, outwardly partake in this sacrament of inward unity. And the visible Church on earth is the root out of which the mystical vine is rising. Within it all holy hearts have an interior fellowship. The mystical Body has its supernatural life, its heaven-born soul, breathed into it on the day of Pentecost, sustained by a perpetual influence of Christ's living presence. And in this living soul all who believe, love, repent, obey, have fellowship. This expanding life for eighteen hundred years has been filling the world unseen with souls elect and purified. The communion begun on earth passes upward into heaven. Death cannot suspend it; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The mystical body in heaven and earth is one. As all rays are united in the sun, so "all spirits and souls of the righteous," before or since the Incarnation, are knit and united in one common centre—the person of the King of saints. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the

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household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."[1] "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."[2]

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."[3]

What may we learn, then, from these mysteries of the kingdom of God? They are not parables, but visions; not shadows, but realities; seen, indeed, by anticipation in their fulness, but actually fulfilling now. The Communion of Saints is not only that which shall be, but that which now exists. There is in the world unseen an unnumbered company which has sympathy with us

[1] Eph. ii. 19-21.
[2] Heb. xii. 22, 23.
[3] Rev. vii. 13, 14.

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on earth, and we with them are even now partakers of their heavenly work and worship. The whole book of Revelation, as its beginning is past, and its end is still to come, so all between is the history of the career and warfare of the Church on earth, and of the sympathy and communion of the Church in heaven.

1. Let us, then, learn, first of all, that we can never be lonely or forsaken in this life.

Our Lord has promised: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And in Him all His saints are with us too. Where He is, they are; for they reign with Him; they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth;" the armies which are in heaven "follow Him." The sympathy of the Son of God is with us; and His sympathy, as it is human in its tenderness, so it is divine in its perfection. As the anointing upon the head of the high priest ran down to the skirts of his clothing, so all the perfections of the Head of the mystical body flow down upon His members. They share His sympathy with the Church militant on earth. Shall they forget us because they are "made perfect?" Shall they love us the less because they now have power to love us more? If we forget them not, shall they not remember us with God?

No trial, then, can isolate us, no sorrow can

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cut us off from the Communion of Saints. There is but one thing in which the sympathy of Christ has no share, and that is, the guilt of wilful sin. If we live sinfully, we isolate ourselves. Both heaven and earth alike will cast us out. We have no home or fellowship, for there is neither fellowship nor home where God is not. What wonder, then, if sinners are miserable? What wonder if they go up and down in a crowded solitude, under the conscious burden of their own loneliness? What more outcast than a proud, angry, false, revengeful spirit? Or who is more alone than a close hypocrite, who wears white that he may pass among Christians in the worship of the Church, and perhaps at the very altar? Or, again, what share in the kingdom of God have the soft and selfish, the refined and luxurious?

The Communion of Saints has no sympathy for them, as they have no tokens of their Lord. The sign of saints is the cross of Christ. Somewhere it must be found stamped upon them, either in their outward life or their inward spirit, upon some affection or desire, upon some infirmity or fault, upon something willingly foregone or gladly given to another. Some mark of the cross there must be; for where no cross is, there is no communion. In all hard strife with sin and with the world, in all stubborn temptations and ever-returning trials,

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in all the sorrows of repentance, and all the sharpness of affliction, though without visible friends, we cannot be forsaken. Above all, they who labour for Christ and for His kingdom can never be alone. They are "workers together with God," and He is on the field of their daily toil: "His eyes are upon them all the year long." Angels and men in a wonderful order labour with them: unseen ministries are about them, and the great cloud of witnesses is intent upon their strife. So long as we are within the truth, be we never so lonely, all the kingdom of Christ is with us. Truth unites us with eternity. Outside of the truth, though we be in a multitude, we must be ever alone. But the laws of the kingdom are universal, reaching beyond time and the world, and bringing us into communion with all the servants and saints of the Most High. Sects and schools, individual judgments, private opinions, and the like, are selfish and solitary. But the faith is the common consciousness and life of the elect; and they who stand for it, although they stand alone against all the world, are never alone, for all the companies of heaven and all the generations of the Church are at their side. Kneel down, and you are with them; lift up your eyes, and the heavenly world, high above all perturbation, hangs serenely over head. Only a thin veil, it may be, floats between.

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When the prophet stood with his servant all alone in Dothan compassed with enemies, the whole mountain was full of the chariots of God. So all His holy ones, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints, all His pure and perfect servants, compass His Church on earth. All whom we loved, and all who loved us; whom we still love no less, while they love us yet more, are ever near, because ever in His presence in whom we live and dwell. Awaken this blessed consciousness. Keep ever open your living fellowship with the Lord Jesus, who is the pledge of all sympathy, the channel of all fellowship, and the head of all communion.

2. And let us learn further, by the reality of this heavenly fellowship, to live less in this divided world. Christ died for the sin of the world; but the hundred and forty and four thousand, a few from among many, are gathered out of it, and "the world lieth in wickedness." Every one of that perfect number, in his day, renounced the world, and died to it. There is an eternal opposition between the world and God. "The friendship of the world is enmity against God;" because the world is the kingdom of the flesh, and "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject unto the law of God, neither indeed can be." If it became subject, it would cease to exist: enmity is its very existence. It matters not

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in what forms this may be embodied; whether in sensual or refined sins, in the grosser or the more cultivated forms of atheism; only that the grosser are often less guilty, and the cultivated are often more intense: or in luxury, self-worship, vain-glory, jealousy, wrath, scorn, rivalry, effeminate hardness of heart, and the like: it is all one before God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."[1] If we live in fellowship with the world, we have no fellowship with Christ. If we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us; and if no love of the Father, then no communion with His kingdom.

Between these two we must make our choice. We are between two cities—the one visible, the other invisible—the one an object of sense, the other of faith—the one garish, splendid, and tumultuous, the other calm, glorious, and serene. On the one side, the world, and this earthly life, with its fair show, luring gifts, bright promises, gilded ambition; on the other, the city of God, the fellowship of saints, the sympathy of Christ, the love of the Father, the Beatific Vision.

[1] 1 St. John ii. 15, 16.

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Choose one you must. Either you must have a life—not sinful, or gross, or reckless, or profane—of these we are not speaking—but in this world, and of this world, loved by it, courted, followed, endowed, gifted, smooth, and fair, without sharpness or cross, without contradiction or shame, without devotion or self-denial, without saintliness or repentance; or you must have a life of striving and suffering, of temptation and weariness, of faith and faintness, of hope and fear, of longing and waiting, of anxious desires and slow tarrying answers; bearing the weight of a conscious immortality, with sins remembered in the conscience, and intentions pent up in the heart. One of these two you must choose to be your own. Either in this world "to have your reward," or to have your "life hid with Christ in God." For He has said, "I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword;" and with that sharp two-edged weapon He is severing His own from this perishing world. He has been cutting all round you to set you free by His ministries of truth and grace, by warnings and chastisements, by blessings and visitations, by His words piercing the outward ear, and His presence moving your inward heart.

Look back upon your past life. Retrospect will interpret it as a whole, and marshal all its parts in order. Through all your earthly trial He

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has had one steadfast intention, to bring you to Himself.

3. And lastly, let us learn from this Communion of Saints to live in hope.

They who are now at rest were once like ourselves. They were once fallen, weak, faulty, sinful; they had their burdens and hindrances, their slumbering and weariness, their failures and their falls. But now they have overcome.

Their life was once homely and commonplace. While on earth they were not arrayed in white raiment, but in apparel like other men, unmarked and plain, worn and stained by time and trial. Their day ran out as ours. Morning and noon and night came and went to them as to us. Their life, too, was as lonely and sad as yours. Little fretful circumstances and frequent disturbing changes wasted away their hours as yours. Many a time their "feet were almost gone," their "treadings had well nigh slipped." They had their professions and business, their works and trades, their cares and burdens; they were fathers, mothers, masters, servants; rich or poor, learned or unlettered, even as you; their life was in a sheltered home, or in the glare of the noonday world; they lived either free from hard cares and toils, or worn down with labours and anxiety. There is nothing in your life that was not in theirs;

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there was nothing in theirs but may be also in your own.

Only one thing there is in which we are unlike them: they were common in all things except the uncommon measure of their inward sanctity. In all besides we are as they; only it is now our turn to strive for the crown of life. And now, because our turn is come, we think some trial new and strange is come upon us; that God has changed His way, or sent us fewer graces and greater temptations.

Let each one search, then, and see what is his especial sin, danger, and trial. And let him remember, that already, long ago, many a like sinner or sufferer has been gathered into the rest of saints. They have overcome, each one, and one by one; each in his turn, when the day came, and God called him to the trial. And so shall you likewise.

Live, then, in this blessed fellowship. Ponder their examples and their lives: their infirmities, for your encouragement; their masteries, for your humiliation. And now, how peaceful are they, and secure; how full of rest and God. Make sure your lot in their inheritance in light. All around you, God is gathering out His own, making up the number of His elect. All around, the world is ripening to the rankness of corruption. The

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world is falling, because it is divided from God, and against itself; the Communion of Saints is rising heavenward, because it is united in conscious unity with itself and with its Head.

Before long, we too shall be without sin. The longest life, how short. The fairest earthly bliss, how poor. A few short years, and all will be over. Then there shall be no more sin and jar, no more infirmity and imperfections: then we shall have the power to taste of bliss, and to endure the taste.

Then cometh the end. O what a day, when the earth and the heavens shall give token of His coming. When you shall lift up your heads and say, "Is this the end of all? Is it come at last?" O what an hour, when He shall come, and all His holy angels, and all the children of the kingdom: all who have loved, served, waited, suffered for Him: the first and the last, all in perfect sameness, recognition, bliss, and splendour; their raiment white and glistering, and their countenance as the sun shineth in his strength. O vision of majesty and beauty, when the holy city shall come down from God out of heaven, and a great voice shall say, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God

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shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."[1]

[1] Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

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SERMON XIX.

THE SEALING OF THE ELECT.

Rev. vii. 2, 3.

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

SIX of the seven seals had been already opened before the prophetic vision of St. John, and both heaven and earth were filled with the tokens of God's last judgment upon the world. "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;" and voices went up from the earth in terror and great fear, saying "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

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And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree :" that is, in vision, where time and space are not, St. John saw the whole face of the earth as it lies expanded before the eyes of God. He saw the scourges of God gathered to the full, ready to burst upon mankind; and four angels, the ministers of the justice of God, holding back the powers of divine retribution for a time appointed. And afterwards he saw "another angel ascending from the east," the minister of God's grace and mercy—the harbinger of the day-spring, the bright and morning star—"having the seal of the living God," that is, the power and commission to mark off, with a signet of salvation, the number of God's elect. "And he cried with a loud voice," laying a divine command upon the destroying angels, that they should stay their work till the elect should receive the seal of the living God. There was a suspense in heaven and earth until the work of grace should be accomplished. "And I heard," writes St. John, "the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand."

In this majestic vision we have clearly revealed to us, not only some special action of the kingdom

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of God in judgment and in mercy, but also a revelation of the continuous exercise of His sovereignty of grace.

This awful transaction is not an event of time past, though, as in a type and prelude, it may have had already a fulfilment; neither is it an action simply in time to come, as if it were not yet in operation, though, doubtless, it will be once for all accomplished when, under the suspended judgments of the last day, the angels shall go abroad to gather His elect from the four winds of heaven. There is here revealed to us a divine idea, and a divine law of action, which is now advancing with perpetual energy, past, present, and to come.

It reveals to us the state of the world, doomed by God's righteous sentence, but spared for a while till the work of God is done. It shews us:

1. First, that God has a foreknown number whom He will gather out unto Himself.

In the foreknowledge of God all is eternally perfect and complete. There is no succession in the eternal mind. All His works stand perfect in their first and final type; each one a whole and perfect idea, eternally conceived, willed, accomplished. Even now, in the Divine foreknowledge, the mystery of redemption is beheld in its fulness. To Him who "calleth those things which be not as though they were," it now is as to us it shall be.

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The whole of the new creation sprung from, and surrounding, the second Adam in the kingdom of life eternal; the mystical Person of Christ, both the Head and the Body, all perfect "by that which every joint supplieth;" the true and eternal Vine, complete in all its symmetry from root to spray; the heavenly court, compassed about with ranks of angelic hosts: the order of patriarchs, and the multitude of saints, ascending to the Mother of God and to the Incarnate Son: all this divine and glorious mystery of miraculous love and power stands in the foreknowledge and gaze of the Eternal, full, perfect, and accomplished. Time is not with God, save as He works in time. Time is subject to the Divine intent. Time waits upon His will, and serves it; and then, as the Divine purpose is fulfilled, ceases to exist. What is with us gradual and successive, with God is absolute and complete. The series and unfolding of creation and redemption to us are progressive, to Him are one symmetrical and perfect whole, on which the Divine will and gaze is fixed.

Before creation, God dwelt in His eternal rest, blissful in Himself, in His own goodness, power, and love; and into the same rest He will return again when all the works of creation and of redemption shall be exhausted, and the fruit of them gathered in. Until then, all power in heaven and

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in earth is given unto the Son. But when all is accomplished in time, then shall the Son also Himself, with all His elect, the hundred and forty and four thousand in perfection and in unity, "be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." When that predestined hour is come, all orders and ranks of sinless creatures, angels, archangels, virtues and dominions, thrones, principalities, powers, cherubim, seraphim, and the mystical body of the Word made flesh, shall dwell together in the eternal rest before the face of God. This is the end for which all is ordained, to which all conspires, for which all things are waiting.

2. We see further, that the course of this world will run on until this foreknown number shall be gathered in. All things are for the elect's sake. For their sake the world standeth; for their sake the last judgments are held back; "for their sake these days shall be shortened." "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."[1] But though God's work in creation was simultaneous, His dominion in providence is progressive. He has ordained the generations of mankind in a successive order; and

[1] 2 St. Peter iii. 9.

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from each succession, as it comes up, He gathers out those whom He hath foreknown. Meanwhile the world runs on its course. The power of sin, which entered in the beginning, casts itself into a thousand forms, lifts itself in enmity against God, moulds the fallen creatures of God into endless shapes of provocation, and wages a perpetual rebellion. Mankind had hardly multiplied upon the earth, when the world was ripe for destruction; wrath was long threatened, and yet long held back. It is withheld still for the sake of the elect. What is the history of the world, but a history of man's warfare against God? of our provocation, and of His patience? What are the religions, philosophies, kingdoms of the old world, but idolatry, atheism, rebellion? What are they now? What is philosophy without faith, civilisation without Christianity, education without moral laws, empires owning no omnipotence but their own, wars without justice, wealth desecrated, refinement without the cross? And what are the traditions, characters, and moral life of the nations, people, and masses of our Christian world? What is the state of the whole world at this hour? Two-thirds heathen or infidel; and of what remains of the old wreck of Christendom, what judgment is recorded in heaven? What hatred and enmity, what mockery and provocation, what schisms and here-

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sies, what spiritual revolts and national apostacies, what challenge and defiance of the long-suffering of God and of His Christ!

Why, then, "tarry the wheels of His chariots?" They "are twenty thousand," "more than twelve legions of angels." Why do not the armies of heaven ride forth on white horses to avenge the name of their Lord upon a hardened and hopeless world? Why are the four mighty whirlwinds yet stayed? What holds them from blowing upon the earth? They are bound by the hands of the Divine patience, only till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads.

3. And this shews us, once more, that even now, while judgment is stayed, the Church in the midst of us is sealing God's elect.

The angel ascending from the east is a type of the ministry of angels and men knit together in one order of grace, to gather out the heirs of salvation. Ever since the world began, this invisible work of mercy has been carrying on. "One has been taken, and another left." Abel was sealed, and Cain cast out; Enoch "was not, for God took him:" and they are types of the ingathering of God's secret ones from the ruin of the elder world. So afterwards, Noah and Abraham, Melchisedech and Job, the saints of Israel, every tribe in its own order, from generation to generation,

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yielding up its remnant to be sealed with the seal of God. In the darkest times of God's Church of old there were found seven thousand men who had not fallen away: even at the last, when the holy city had become an harlot, and sects and factions in the Church of God crucified the Lord of glory, there were still saints hidden from the world, "waiting for the consolation." Their feet wore the threshold of the temple; and they knelt, day by day, unknown before the altar.

So, too, in every age till now. In times of persecution, heresy, apostacy, or in earthly peace, splendour, and dominion, the Church has been gathering out God's chosen servants from all nations and from all lands, from all families and households, here one and there another, one by one, sealing each individual soul, as if there were no other in the presence of God.

The visible polity of the Church, its stately ritual and public solemnities, its fasts and feasts, its chants and litanies, its missions and preachings, all the public order and movement which meets the eye and the ear,—all this is as the "net let down into the sea, which taketh of every kind, both good and bad." But this is not the sealing of the elect. It is an inner work of grace, a choosing from among the chosen, a preparation for that day, when, upon the eternal shore, the angels

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"shall gather the good into vessels, and cast the bad away." There are, therefore, two special truths to be noted in this matter, lest we deceive ourselves.

The first is, that the ultimate and true election of God is not collective but several, not of bodies but of persons. The national election of Israel was a type of the Catholic election of the Church; the Jewish election was the personal election of Abraham enlarged, and the Catholic election is the visible ministry of grace for gathering in the heirs of Abraham's faith. The visible Church is elect for the elect's sake. It was this great mystery of grace of which St. John Baptist spoke, when he said, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."[1] Their national or traditional election would not save them; nothing but the personal and individual election of grace. So with the visible Church of Christ. "Many are called, but few are chosen." The world-wide tradition of baptism gathered into the visible election of the Church, first individuals, one by one, then households, then families, races, nations,—all alike gathered into the way of life, and within the sphere and powers of the world to

[1] St. Matt. iii. 9.

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come, sealed all alike with the outward seal of confessions and sacraments. But what do we see all around? what does every age of the Church attest, every land in Christendom, every portion of the Church? The baptised are many, holy hearts are few; many called to be Christ's, few chosen; many regenerate, few sons of God; much sowing, little reaping; much planting, but a scanty vintage. Let this teach us to look deeper than our baptism and our creed: both are of God, and both necessary to eternal life; but neither, nor both, suffice alone. Let us search below the passive Christianity of our childhood, and the visible election we share with the inconsistent and unconverted. Nations do not inherit the kingdom of God as nations, nor do households as households enter into life; but each several soul, as it is born into this world alone, is ever lonely before God: even in the throng of multitudes, when we fall down before God in worship before the altar, when we adore Him in united chants, and in fullest communion, with a voice as of many waters; yet even then each soul is several and alone, standing or falling by itself, bearing the weight of its own immortality, with the burden of its sins and graces, its gifts and responsibilities, its time past, present, and to come. Born alone, alone we must live; alone repent, pray, fast, watch, persevere, and die;

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each one for himself "work out his own salvation," and make his "calling and election sure."

And the other truth is, that this mystery of election, as it is personal, so it is strictly consistent with our personal probation. Strange that they who believe the eternity of God should entangle themselves in questions about predestination. Once believe an Eternal Mind, and we have ascended into a sphere of faith where all things are transcendent. We can no longer reason by terms of logic or by definitions in words. If God be omniscient, must He not foreknow all things? and if He be omnipotent, why can He not create free agents. Who are we to set His perfections in contradiction? But it is plainly declared, not more by words of holy Scripture than by the whole revealed character of God, and the universal consciousness of man, that every several soul is a free moral being, responsible for the powers and will with which he is divinely endowed, and for the acts and words which issue from them.

On whom did St. John see the angel impress the seal of the elect? On the servants of God; that is, on those who were found faithful, each one in his place fulfilling his Master's work. The parable of the talents is a key to the name 'servant.' It is the title of those who, having received the grace of their Lord to lay out in His service,

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use what is entrusted to them with care and diligence: it describes the state of the regenerate, and the law of their probation.

After years well spent in faithful service, when the will and heart are ripened by trial into steadfast faith and love, then, in His mercy, God bestows a crowning gift upon His servants—the grace of perseverance.

There is an interior ministry of the Spirit, ever working, sealing by an inward and divine seal the proved servants of Christ: not by a capricious or mechanical predestination, but by an election founded on the moral attributes of God and on the moral nature of man. God made man free, and elects him to and in the exercise of freedom, will, and power. And what is this seal of the living God, but the image of God renewed in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost; the likeness and the mind of Christ stamped upon us by a perfect regeneration; the inward reality of a saintly spirit wrought in us, either by a life of steadfast obedience or by a true repentance, by a persevering grace or by a perfect conversion?

This work of grace is now, by the ministry of the Church, fulfilling all around, and will work on unseen unto the end. Then, when the mystical number is accomplished, and every soul foreknown has received the seal of God, the seventh and last

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seal of the Book shall be opened, and the scourges of God, long pent up, come down upon the earth.

Ask yourselves, therefore, whether or no you are of this secret number? whether or no you have received this seal of God?

What else is worth living for? Though you should have all, and not this alone, what shall it profit in the day of judgment? Though you have nothing else but this alone, what shall you then desire?

But how shall we try ourselves? By what tokens shall we discern the hope of our election? Not by any external signs, nor by any supernatural intimations, nor by resting upon absolute decrees and the like; but by the deep inward marks of the work of God in us, by the correspondence of our spirit with the will and working of the Spirit of God. Let us, then, try ourselves by some plain questions of self-examination.

1. The first question to ask ourselves is, What is our character? This very word, which we so habitually use, signifies a stamp impressed upon our spiritual nature. It is the counterpart of sealing. And we use it to signify the whole outline of our moral being. Character is to the heart what countenance is to the features: it is the form and shape into which the affections, powers, and actions of the will have been cast and moulded.

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And this inward shaping is always at work. We are from childhood between two strong powers—this world and the world to come; and both exert a strange and searching influence, according as we turn our hearts towards them. To the one or to the other we are being surely likened. Therefore St. Paul says, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."[1] Either we are perpetually changing into a worldlier, earthlier soul, or we are being changed by union with Christ "into the same image from glory to glory."[2] When we speak, then, of character, we mean the clear, conscious, and definite shape and direction which has been given to our whole spiritual nature.

How many people never ask themselves what shape their mind and spirit have assumed. How many live on unconscious that they are being either sealed or branded; that they are daily fixing their eternal state. Yet surely it is no hard thing to find out whether we are living in any known sin or not; whether we are striving against temptations or not; whether we have mastery over our faults or our faults over us; whether we desire the love of God or not; whether sin is to us a sorrow, and the very thought of holiness a delight; whether we are living for this

[1] Rom. xii. 2. [2] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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world or for the next. Surely it can be no hard thing to answer these questions, nor to find whether we are taking as our example the character of the world or the character of Christ; the tone of society or the sermon on the mount; the maxims of worldly wisdom or the eight beatitudes; whether we follow the majority of Christians or the company of saints, the plausible and pleasant religion of social life or the severe and lonely spirit of the cross.

Perhaps we are forced to confess that this higher character is so faintly traced upon us, that we hardly dare to claim it; then let us ask ourselves another and a more lenient question.

2. If we have not this character, what are our tendencies? To what do our desires, aspirations, thoughts, incline? To what does our will tend? If we dare not say that we are penitent or devout, dead to self and to the world, can we say that such is our tendency? that we are moving, be it ever so slowly, in that direction? If we look back on a number of years, do we seem to have moved at all in that direction? Has sin been losing hold, and the spirit of sanctity gaining power over us? Are our temptations weaker, and we stronger; our faults fewer, and our repentance deeper? Or, to take any one besetting sin, do we less often fall into it, more quickly rise from it, hate it more

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keenly, and humble ourselves more sorrowfully? Or, to take any one work of charity or devotion, do we give ourselves to it with a fuller, freer, and more generous heart? Are our prayers less wandering and irksome? Is crossing our own will easier? The service of the sick, the care of the poor, the instruction of the ignorant—is it more soothing and pleasant? Do we exercise ourselves in meditation on the person, presence, and love of our Lord, on the purity and bliss of His kingdom, with greater desire and joy? By some such questions we shall see whither we are tending, and to what we are being conformed.

But it may be that we may be forced to give sorrowful answers to these questions, and to say that we feel neither holier nor humbler, more devout or penitent, than we did. And yet it is probably true that we are moving steadily onwards in the path of life; for the changes of our spiritual nature are like the changes of our stature, so slow as to be insensible: it is only after some years of growth that its advance can be perceived and measured; nevertheless the tendency is steady and unceasing. So with sincere hearts; the outline of the mind of Christ is ever shaping and deepening within them. It often happens that the more it advances, the less they perceive it, that the increase of inward sanctity conceals itself,

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and shews only by an intenser light the sinfulness of their sinful hearts: so that the less sinful they grow, the more sinful they see themselves to be; that is, the more truly they see both what they have been and what they are. And by this they are often cast down, not daring to believe that the increased sense of sin is an increase of sanctification: but this is a sure token which way their whole spiritual nature is tending.

3. The last question we may ask is, What is our habitual intention? What, at your best seasons of recollection, is your deliberate aim? In times of sadness, sickness, anxiety, or in moments of prayer and devotion, what do you choose before all as the object of your supreme desire? At such seasons you feel the emptiness of time and the substance of eternity; you would give the whole world to save your soul; you would rather die sevenfold than sin once mortally; you would choose the love of God rather than all His gifts; to be numbered among His elect here in this world, albeit with repentance, hardness, solitude, temptation, and the cross, rather than to taste all sweetness, and possess all gifts of life, with a doubtful perseverance. At such times, it may be, your one great desire is to be sealed with the seal of the living God. And yet at other times you are conscious of sinking into a life so easy and forgetful,

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so unconscious of your one great aim, and so in harmony with this earthly state, that the higher tone seems to be artificial, and the lower to be your true tendency and character.

Now to this it may be said, Take courage. The true self of sincere minds is that which speaks and aspires in their better moments. The lower level on which they move at other times is the way of their infirmity. As the resistance of the atmosphere stays the keenest arrow's flight, and bends it to the earth again, so the purest and directest intention is slackened by the gross thick airs of our daily life. Not to sink into a slower, earthlier motion is the portion of those who are lifted into a higher and heavenlier sphere, where the actings of the soul have nothing to resist them. In heaven "they rest not day nor night;" but on earth the most unresting intention is overcome by weakness and weariness at last. It cannot always be conscious and actual; but that does not take away its true and habitual reality.

Let this, then, be your continual endeavour, to uphold and to prolong these higher intentions. He who inspired them will sustain them. These heavenward aspirations are not the emotions of nature, but the stirrings of grace, which, as it descended from heaven, so always strives to ascend to heaven again. Quicken and strengthen

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these desires by a life of prayer, by meditation, by habitual communion, by self-examination, by confession; by exercises of the heart, and by acts of faith, hope, and love. A soul united to God is endowed with the gift of perseverance; a will restored to its true freedom, hating sin, and delighting in the presence of Christ, shall be steadfast eternally; a heart kindled by the Holy Spirit is "sealed unto the day of redemption."

Every day this work is advancing, and the impression of the saving sign sinks deeper and deeper in those who serve Him. It matters not where or what we are, so we be His servants. They are happy who have a wide field and great strength to fulfil His missions of compassion; and they too are blessed who, in sheltered homes and narrow ways of duty, wait upon Him in lowly services of love. Wise or simple, gifted or slender in knowledge, in the world's gaze or in hidden paths, high or low, encompassed by affections and joys of home or lonely and content in God alone, what matters, so that they bear the seal of the living God? Blessed company, unknown to each other, unknowing even themselves; not daring to believe what they would die to gain; hoping against hope; hopeless in themselves; hopeful ever, because their Lord is patience, pity, and love. Blessed and numberless fellowship, from Abel until now; some in

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the world unseen, already sealed and sure; some yet scattered in all lands, of every tribe and tongue, most diverse and manifold in state, lot, and trial, yet all of one character, one stamp, one seal,—the image of the Son of God. In a little while, a few short years, it may be, and all will be over. We shall then know what now we hardly dare to hope. Our election will be revealed, the mystery of God's elect accomplished, the world tried out in patience and long-suffering, in love and justice. Then cometh the end, when the angel of grace shall no longer stay the judgment of the earth. In that hour, before the face of the Lamb, who shall be able to stand? Be we among the quick or dead, may we "find mercy of the Lord in that day."

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SERMON XX.

THE RESURRECTION.

St. John xi. 25.

"I am the Resurrection."

ALL the titles of our Lord are names of power. They express His nature, perfection, or prerogatives; what they declare, He is. They are shadows of a divine substance. He who is Very Life raised Himself from the dead: "I am the Resurrection." So He had declared before: "I give My life for the sheep. . . . No man taketh it from Me. . . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."[1] After His week of passion, He lay down to rest, having taken both sin and death in their own snare. Sin crucified Him, and death received Him into the grave. By His death He destroyed sin; by His rising again He abolished death; breaking up the snares

[1] St. John x. 15, 18.

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in which He had given Himself to be entangled. His resurrection reveals the mystery of His Godhead and of His Incarnation. From the hour of the Annunciation, Godhead and manhood were in Him eternally united. When He gave up the ghost upon the cross, His human soul and His human body were parted asunder, as in the common death of man; but both soul and body were still united with His Godhead. His human soul went down into the abode of departed spirits. All who, from righteous Abel until that day, had waited for the revelation of the Redeemer—patriarchs, who had the promise of His coming, and prophets who foretold it—then at last beheld Him. Abraham, who afar off saw His day, and was glad, then saw His very presence. All His saints of old, with the penitent absolved upon the cross, beheld the divine seed of the woman, and entered with Him into the paradise of God. Meanwhile His sacred body, lying in the grave, pure and incorruptible, united still with His Godhead, waited the appointed hour. On the first day of the week His glorious soul returned to His pure flesh, and His manhood, whole and perfect, through the power of His Godhead, arose of His own will. He woke up as from rest in sleep; He came back the very same, and yet the same no more. The dishonour of His holy passion had passed away,

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but its tokens still were there. Though His sacred flesh was no more torn and stained by thorns and scourges, yet the signs of His cross were there. The five hallowed Wounds are still imprinted on His glorious and immortal manhood. They are "the wells of salvation" to His elect, the fountains of light and love to the world of the redeemed.

And as in body, so in soul. He was no more the Man of sorrows, no more sorrowing unto death, no more in anguish, no more in agony of spirit, but calm, blissful, majestic. Death had no more dominion over Him; yet He was full of sympathy, learned by dying. All the depths of His human experience were in Him still. His past life of humiliation; the sorrows which, as God, He could never taste; the knowledge of our inheritance of pain, learned at Nain and Bethany, in the upper chamber and in Gethsemane; all this still lived in His divine consciousness. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered;" and the ineffable mystery of His three and thirty years of sorrow rose with Him from the grave.

Wherefore this divine name, as it reveals the power of His own resurrection, so it is the pledge of ours. As He raised up Himself, so He will raise us likewise. He is our resurrection: "Because I live, ye shall live also." "In Him is life, and the life is the light of men." "As the Father hath life

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in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; so the Son quickeneth whom He will."[1] For like as the seed contains the harvest, and the power of a multiplying life ever rising from itself; and as the sun draws up after it the lights of the morning and the splendours of the day, so, because He is risen, we shall rise. As His Godhead and manhood are united in one divine person, so we and the Lord of the resurrection are united in one mystical body. A living head must needs have living members; and a Head that is risen must raise His members in due season: at that day when "He shall come to be glorified in His saints" in the fulness of His kingdom. Our union with Him, therefore, is no figure or metaphor, but is truth and spirit, reality and life. He *is* our resurrection.

This divine Name, then, is a pledge to us of many joys; but chiefly of three divine gifts.

1. The first is a perfect newness of body and soul. This is a thought of wonder almost beyond conception or belief. Death and the forerunners of death have so fast a hold upon the body; sin and the soils of sin pierce so deep into the soul, that the thought to be one day deathless and sinless seems to be a dream. Who has ever felt in

[1] St. John i. 4; v. 26, 20, 21.

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himself the working of sickness, or watched over it in others—who has ever seen it withering, wasting, crippling, deforming, dissolving the fairest and the strongest—baffling all skill of man, and all power of healing,—and not felt as if the body were a spoil given up for ever to the grave? People believe, indeed, that we shall rise again, not disembodied, but clothed in a bodily form; but do they realise that they shall rise again with their own bodies, in their very flesh, healed and immortal? Do they, as they hang over the clouded and darkened form of those whom they have loved, say, "I believe the resurrection of the body, of this very frame, made new in the kingdom of God?" And yet this is pledged to us. This very body shall be deathless and glorious as the body of His glory when He arose from the dead.

And so, too, of the soul. It shall be still more glorious than the body, even as the spirit is above the flesh. The more we know of ourselves, the more incredible, if I may so speak, for very blessedness, this promise seems. To be without sin, what else is heaven? And can it ever be that we, who brought sin with our life-blood into the world,—who have fallen and soiled ourselves through and through with wilful evil,—that we shall be one day clear as the light, and white as the driven snow? Yet this is His pledge to us. To believe it is even

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harder than to believe the mysteries of the Incarnation. For these are objects of the intellect, a faculty comparatively pure; but here it is the heart which must believe of itself that it shall be one day sinless. Our consciousness seems to rise up and say, "It is impossible." What must we feel, as penitents remembering sins unnumbered and coldly repented; or as tempted and fearfully inclined towards our own destruction; or burdened and conscious of the inward taint and susceptibility of all spiritual disorder,—what must we feel at the thought that one day in all our conscience there shall not be a blot, in all our affections there shall not be a blemish, in all our will there shall neither be a shadow of variance with the will of our Lord, nor a moment's relaxation of our love and worship?

To be ourselves the subject of this miracle of love and power; to be personally and inwardly restored to a sinless perfection, and raised to the glory of an endless life, as if death and sin had never entered, or we had never fallen,—is among those things which we almost "believe not for joy." This is the first divine gift pledged to us by the resurrection of our Lord.

2. Another gift also pledged to us is the perfect restoration of all His brethren in His kingdom. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may

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behold My glory."[1] "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."[2] From His eternal throne "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." "He shall see His seed,"[3] and they "shall serve Him,"[4] "and His name shall be in their foreheads."[5] He and all His servants from the beginning of the world shall be there united; all His patriarchs and prophets, all His martyrs and apostles, all His saints and penitents, all the companies and orders of life, all the hosts and armies of heaven, each one perfect as Himself, shall be gathered in His presence. We shall be "with Him." We shall behold Him as He is; He will behold us as we are: He in the perfect sameness of His person; we in ours. What, then, means this unbelieving Christian world, when it asks, Shall we then recognise each other? Will not they all know Him as He them, and all know each other as He knows each? Will He know Daniel and Isaiah, and shall they not know each other? Or shall the Apostles, who knew Moses and Elias upon Tabor, know them no more, when all are transfigured on Mount Sion? And they who knew Him after He

[1] St. John xvii. 24.
[2] St. John xiv. 2, 3.
[3] Isaiah liii. 11, 10.
[4] Ps. xxii. 30.
[5] Rev. xxii. 4.

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rose from the dead, and knew each other as they sat in amazement before Him in the morning at the sea of Tiberias, shall they not know each other in the light of His heavenly kingdom? O dull hearts, and slow to believe what He has Himself spoken: "God is not the God of the dead,"—of nameless, obscured, obliterated spirits, of impersonal natures, beings robbed of their identity, spoiled of their consciousness—of blinded eyes, or marred aspects. The law of perfect recognition is inseparable from the law of perfect identity. Our individual consciousness must be eternal. We should not be what we are to ourselves, if we were not so to others. They would lose their identity, if they were not the same to us. The whole of God's kingdom, from His own incommunicable glory to the least among His elect, is founded upon the truth and identity of personal being. The whole mystery of our probation, and of the atonement, of our sanctification and reward, all alike rests upon the perpetuity of individual character. And the kingdom of God in glory is the perfection of His kingdom in grace, in which every several soul here tried, chastened, and purified, shall be there blessed, crowned, and sainted—the same in person, changed only to perfection.

And more than this. The perfect restitution which shall be in the kingdom of the resurrection

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will bring back, not only perfect mutual recognition, but the restoration of all pure and consecrated bonds. Shall we be told that in the kingdom of God Jacob will no more be the son of Isaac, nor Isaac the son of Abraham? that Ruth shall not be to Naomi in bliss what she was in widowhood? Shall James and John be brothers no more, nor Martha and Mary sisters? or shall not St. Joseph be the espoused husband of the ever-virgin Mother, and the Lord her Divine Son? These bonds and relations are imperishable as the persons whom they unite. They stamp eternity and bliss upon the name of brother and friend, daughter and sister, husband and wife, son and mother. All bonds of God's first creation shall be transcribed into the new. They are of His creation; therefore are they pure and steadfast, and shall be blissful and eternal. Surely, if this divine law were not written in nature, it is in grace. The mystery of the Incarnation has revealed to us a Mother and a Son, whose bond of ineffable love is eternal. This alone would be enough to shew that all bonds of love, all orders and relations of God's institution, shall be likewise glorified. For in the new heaven and new earth the course of nature shall not pass away, but ascend upward into a supernatural perfection. As in the holy city there shall be neither sun nor moon, but the uncreated light, so shall all nature purified

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abide in God, and be filled with brightness; "for the glory of God" shall lighten it, "and the Lamb is the light thereof."[1]

3. And lastly, this title pledges to us an immortal kingdom. In the beginning God made man, and placed him in the garden, to dress it and to live of its fruits. Eden was to be his own, until translated to the Paradise of God. When he sinned he lost his inheritance and died: earth and heaven turned against him. The heaven lowered with perpetual changes, the earth gave scanty and reluctant fruits; storms and scourges, toil and thorns were his portion. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," was his earthly chastisement: and with sin death spread on every side. All his fairest joys became transient; the most perfect could only endure for a time, and then pass away; eternity had departed with God from the soul of man. What are our sorrows and griefs, toils and weariness, but this, that all our life and state has become transient and changeful? What are poverty, hunger, sickness, early deaths, the breaking up of the most lasting homes, the cutting off of houses and lineage, the failure of hopes, the bitter lamentations of baffled labours, the sickening disappointment even of success,—what are all these but the penalty which fell upon the world

[1] Rev. xxi. 23.

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when man sinned, wasting away his earthly happiness with a perpetual blight? Though he had all his heart's desire, it could not endure for ever; though it endured for ever, it could not satisfy his soul. But the resurrection has restored to us a changeless and eternal home. It has given back to us our inheritance in the Paradise of God, where there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, of which the first creation, even in its perfection, was only an imperfect shadow. In that true paradise there shall be no seasons nor vicissitudes, no sweat of the face nor hard toil for bread. An everlasting noontide shall be there; an endless spring in the newness of unfading joy, a perpetual autumn in the ripeness of its gifts. There shall be "the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits;"[1] all joy and all delight for every capacity of man; reward for every toil, and health for every wound, after the manifold trial of every soul, in the Israel of God.

O home of the weary and over-laboured, of the toiling and careworn, of the struggling and heavy-laden, blessed be thou! In thee shall be no more blasts and conflicts of the world, no more pining and want, no more straining and galling of hands and sinews, of heart and intellect. "There shall be no more curse."[2] But all shall be full,

[1] Rev. xxii. 2. [2] Rev. xxii. 3.

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and all shall be at rest for ever. When all things here shall pass from us and we from them, this yet awaits us. "There remaineth . . . a rest for the people of God." When the happiness of this life burns down, who can rekindle it? The joy of to-day sinks with the sun, and is remembered with sadness to-morrow. The happiness of this world is in the past; at best it lingers in the present, and, even while we are speaking, is gone for ever. All things are fleeting and transient; to see them, we must look behind us. Old friends, old homes, old haunts, old faces, bright days, and sweet memories, all are gone. Such is the best the old creation has for man. But the kingdom of the resurrection is before us, all new, all enduring, all divine; its bliss has no future, no clouds upon the horizon, no fading, no instability. All that we are, by the power of God, we shall be, without cloying, or change, or weariness, for ever.

It has been asked, "Do they keep Easter in heaven?" Not, it may be, by revolution of seasons, or by successions of a changeful calendar; but surely in a perpetual solemnity, in one ceaseless and pure act of heavenly joy, they keep all feasts in one. The feast of the Incarnation, the feast of the Resurrection, the feast of the Ascension, the feast of the Holy Ghost, the feast of the ever-blessed Three in the Beatific Vision,—these

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they keep always, in the fulness of adoration, and it may be more than this. If there be "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;" if the angels of God's little ones do always behold the face of their Father; if there be perpetual sympathy and perpetual intercession between the Church in warfare and the Church in rest; if at the altar they adore with us before the eternal throne, and in the light of God's countenance behold all that He wills for their beatitude,—we may surely believe that the festivals of the Church on earth are no less noted than its repentance; that as they look down upon our sorrows, they keep harmony with our praise; that the fellowship of heavenly hosts, which is ever about the altar, shares with us in the celebration of our Easter sacrifice. Be this as it may, it is but a little time, and we shall all keep Easter in heaven: yet a little while,—and what matters a little while of sorrow or care, toil or weariness, hardness and solitude, repentance and striving, temptation and patience? After the fret and fever of a few short years will come the river of the water of life, "the times of refreshing," and the rest of God. Let us remember that He who is the Resurrection is always with us; and if we be in Him, all things are ours; all shall be restored to us, all made new, all sinless and deathless, all our own again for ever.

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O eternal Life, O everlasting Peace, O Beauty uncreated, O changeless Love, Thou didst say, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thou hast fallen into the earth and died; Thou art "the first-fruits of them that slept;" and from Thee, the divine seed of the new creation, shall spring up the harvest of God upon the everlasting hills. Quicken us by Thyself, that Thou mayest now be our Life; and that at Thy coming we may rise in Thee.

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SERMON XXI.

LIFE EVERLASTING.

St. John xi. 25.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

AFTER the resurrection comes life everlasting. "I am the Life." "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." The Eternal Son is the Life of the world, the fountain from which all created life descends. Therefore He says, "'He that believeth in Me,' that is, he who, being joined to Me by My Spirit, holds to Me by his heart and soul, partaking thereby of My divine life, as members derive life from a living head, —'though he were dead, yet shall he live;' though soul and body were already parted—the soul unclothed, the body in the dust—'yet shall he live.' I hold both body and soul unto Myself, and will knit them together again by the

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power of a life divine. He shall rise again, and live eternally. 'And he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die;' that is, shall not die for ever, or shall live for ever. Death shall not be death to him. Death shall be changed to sleep, full of life and rest, gentle and soft, the body in the quiet earth, the soul in the Paradise of God. And that short slumber of the weary dust shall have its waking; at the resurrection he shall awake up into eternal life." Such is the promise. What does it further teach us?

1. First, we learn that this life and the life to come are not two, but one and the same. Death is not the ending of one, and resurrection the beginning of another, but through all there runs one imperishable life. A river which plunges into the earth, is buried for awhile, and then bursts forth more mightily and in a fuller tide, is not two, but one continuous stream. The light of to-day and the light of to-morrow are not two, but one living splendour. The light of to-day is not quenched at sunset, and rekindled at to-morrow's sunrise; but is ever one, always burning broad and luminous in the sight of God and of holy angels. Night is but a veil between the light and us. So with life and death. The life of the soul is immortal, an image of God's own eternity. It lives on in sleep; it lives on through death;

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it lives even more abundantly, and with fuller and mightier energy. "We that are in this body do groan, being burdened." The flesh that is upon us is a clothing of mortality; and death weighs heaviest upon us while we live. Our true life is vast in expanse, capacity, and power; but in the body it is pent up, narrowed, and enthralled. A sinless body, as in the beginning, was a worthy instrument of its perfection; and the glorious body of the resurrection will be a diviner raiment: but the body of sin is a thraldom and a shroud upon our immortal being. When we put off our sinful flesh, we are delivered "from the body of this death."[1] We begin to live indeed. The one endless life of the soul comes forth from its restraint, and passes onward to a wider and more kindred world.

2. Another great law here revealed is, that as we die, so we shall rise; as there is no new beginning of our life, so there is no new beginning of our character. The stream which buries itself cloudy and turbid shall rise clouded and foul. The waters that pass clear and bright into the earth shall issue from it bright and clear again. As we fall into eternity, so shall we be eternally: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he

[1] Rom. vii. 24.

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that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."[1] What are these but the words of Him who is "the resurrection and the life," sealing every soul at death by a particular judgment of its existing character? We brought nothing into this world, and of all outward things "it is certain we can carry nothing out;" but there is an inward reality here acquired, which we shall each one carry into the eternal world. We shall all carry with us the very self which we have here stamped and moulded, or distorted and branded,—the renewed image of God, or the image of the evil one. Our life, from first to last, teaches us this lesson; it is one continuous whole, gathering up itself through all its course, and perpetuating its earliest features in its latest self: the child is in the boy, the boy is in the man; the man is himself for ever. For good or for evil, we see this constant law prevail. So with the resurrection of the dead. They who die rebellious will rise in rebellion against God; they who die impenitent will rise impenitent; they who die without God in the world will rise without God in eternity. And they too who die in obedience shall rise in obedience; they who die absolved shall rise absolved; they who die united with God in devotion and prayer shall rise united in love and adoration. As we die,

[1] Rev. xxii. 11.

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so shall we be: our character running on into eternity; the bent, disposition, inclination of the soul, with all its powers and affections, shall endure and abide with us for ever; with this only change, that we shall either be better or worse, for good or for evil, absolute and changeless. For we may learn, further:

3. That the resurrection will make each one perfect in his own several character. Nay, even at death it shall be unfolded into a new measure and fulness. Our character is our will; for what we *will* we *are*. Our will contains our whole intention; it sums up our spiritual nature; it contains what we call the tendency of our character: for the will gives the bias to the right or to the left; as we will, so we incline. Now this tendency, both for good and evil, is here imperfect; but it will be there fulfilled. Here it is hindered; the wicked are restrained by truth and grace, by laws and punishments, by fear and shame, by interest and the world; the good are hindered by sin and by temptation, by their own infirmities and faults. But there all restraints shall be taken away, and all aids shall be supplied. It is both an awful and consoling thought. The sinful soul, which has here been curbed by outward checks, will there break forth into an intensity stretched to the utmost by despair. As lights, when they pass

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into an atmosphere akin to fire, burst forth into a volume of flame, so the soul, charged with sin, issuing into the abode of anguish, will break forth into the full measure of its spiritual wickedness. The proud, angry, vindictive, and envious, shall each become absolute in their several kind; tormented, but stamped for ever by a conscious rebellion against the Spirit of God, and eternally rejected from His kingdom. What sinners are now in measure, they shall then be in its fulness. So likewise with the faithful: what they have striven to be, they shall be made. God's grace shall perfect what they had here desired. He sees what is contained in the intensity of a death-bed repentance. The virtues of the will are above the successions of time. To fulfil in a series of acts all the humiliation, devotion, love, self-sacrifice of a contrite will needs time and duration; but to conceive the perfect purpose of "a life hid with Christ in God" may be the act of a moment. And God reads the thought and the resolve of the steadfast will. So in all the life of the regenerate. He sees what is in the intention of each. He measures the sincerity of the heart, the repentance of the soul, the self-rebukes of the conscience, the struggles of the tempted, the perseverance of the weary, the toils of the heavy-laden. He knows what they are striving to become; what they are suffering

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rather than consent to sin; what they are giving up, that they may be His, and His alone. All their heart's desire, all the full meaning of their intention, He knows, interprets, and accepts; and when they pass out from the burdens and straits of this mortal life, He will fulfil their desire, and make them what they have striven and prayed to be. Blessed change to the tempted and buffeted soul, to pass into a sphere where sin can harass and tempt no more; where all that burdens the will and heart shall fall off as bands of flax in the fire, and the whole soul put forth its energies of love, intense and pure, by union and contemplation of God, in foretaste of the hour when our perfect consummation and bliss shall come. Let this, then, teach us two great truths of practice.

1. First, how dangerous is the least sin we do. Every act confirms some old tendency, or develops a new one. This we may see in childhood. A child's whole character is sometimes turned altogether aside by one single act awakening an unknown tendency to sin; and every further act gives force and speed, and, as we say, multiplies the intensity of the will. This life is the childhood of eternity. We are all day long unfolding and fixing the character which shall be eternal. Every act of sin strengthens the inclination which produced it, and reacts upon us, inflaming and aggravating

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the evil disposition of the soul. Acts are the most consummate forms of evil; they express the whole force of the sin which rules us, and of our spiritual nature, which conceives and perfects them. Acts are to the soul what fruits are to a tree,—the full and complete effort of its nature, the production of its entire life and kind. They concentrate our intention, will, thought, desire, and strength; and therefore return with the heaviest recoil upon ourselves, making us more prone to the same sins again, and less willing to resist.

Only less than acts are words of sin; for they also express our whole inward being. And often it is no want of sinful inclination, but only of common courage, which makes men speak what they dare not do. In this case it is hard to say whether sinful words be not in one way even more corrupting than sinful acts; for acts sometimes bring sharp chastisements, while words escape with an impunity of shame. By the tongue men may blacken their whole inmost soul; for verily it "setteth on fire the course of nature; and itself is set on fire of hell."[1]

In like manner, sins of thought fix the whole character and dye of the heart, whether they be thoughts of gross or spiritual wickedness; for not only the baser, but the more refined sins are fatally

[1] St. James iii. 6.

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corrupting. Of the seven sins commonly called deadly, the greater number are spiritual sins, and, as such, peculiarly Satanic. Thoughts of pride, envy, scorn, jealousy, and the like, steep and discolour, wither and scorch the soul; and such as it becomes by its inward actings, such, except by the grace of God converted, it must die, and such it must rise again, and be made perfect in evil for ever.

2. The other truth is, how precious is every means of grace. The patriarch saw in vision a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and at the head of it the Presence of the Lord. This mystical ascent of many steps is, as it were, a parable of the way which leads to a holy resurrection. Every means of grace is a step in that heavenly stair.

Our baptism is a sacrament of the resurrection. In it we died unto sin, were buried with Christ, and with Him rose again. "Buried with Him," St. Paul says, "by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."[1] By the gift of our regeneration we were united to the mystical body of Christ; we were made members of a

[1] Rom. vi. 4.

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Head already risen from the dead; we were joined to Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life." This is the first step in the way; and every act and grace in our regenerate life is a further step towards perfect newness of soul and body. Our Lord Himself, speaking of the resurrection, calls it "the regeneration;" so that baptism is the resurrection begun in us, and the resurrection is baptism made perfect. The whole life of the Church is a continuous regeneration, or a perpetual resurrection: dead souls ever rising, earthly bodies ever changing from mortality to our kindred earth, to be raised again in the perfect glory of everlasting life.

What a depth and worth does this put into all the means and acts of a life of faith; into our prayers, self-examination, and confessions; into all our works of repentance, love, and mercy; but above all, into the blessed sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. He has declared to us, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye

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have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."[1] "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."[2] Therefore this blessed sacrament has been honoured from the beginning, as the medicine which expels the power of death, and the food of immortality.

Let this, then, be our first aim in life, that we may attain unto the resurrection of the holy dead. Let us learn to count all things "but loss, that we may win Christ," and at that day "be found in Him;" "that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection;" working in us with a new and vivid life, awakening our whole soul, to live by Him, to Him, and in Him, "if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on him the second death hath no power." Whatsoever be this mystery of a first fruits from among the dead at Christ's coming, there is a first resurrection which must now pass

[1] St. John vi. 50, 51, 53, 54.

[2] St. John vi. 57, 58.

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on all who would partake of it hereafter; a rising now from the death of sin to a life in God's spirit and presence. Let this be our great work from the present hour until the resurrection of the dead. For what else will suffice, what else endure, when all things below God shall pass away? What, then, is life for a while, even the saddest, loneliest, sharpest? what are the cares and forebodings, the sorrows and tears, the pains and sicknesses, the tears and sighs of repentance, the fears and shrinkings as death comes near? Where shall all these be when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed?" O where then will be the care-worn and mourners, the sick and the penitent, when all shall be full of heavenly joy, and clothed in heavenly array; when loved faces shall be no more clouded or death-struck, but blissful and radiant with eternal beauty? Believest thou this? and yet weepest thou? There shall be no wounds then in flesh or spirit, no pining and wasting of body, but eternal health; no griefs of penitent souls, but the peace of a perfect absolution. Believest thou this? O day of miracles! O miracle of power and love divine! we shall rise again in all personal perfection, as if sin had never entered, nor death ever set foot upon the earth; we shall be gathered unto Him who is our life, with all our loved ones in perfect mutual

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knowledge, and all bonds made new. We shall be a new creation, and yet still the old; new in all the perfectness of bliss, old in all the truth of our being. He hath renewed, not another creation, but our own; He hath created again, not another race in our likeness, but our very selves. He partook of our very substance, that He might raise us up each one in the newness of His Divine humanity.

And there shall we see Him face to face; we shall fall down and worship with the full flow of love made perfect, with the direct energy of a heart made like His own. We shall not only behold Him, but have power both to love and to adore; our whole spiritual being spotless as the angels of God; all our intelligence filled with uncreated light; all our affections kindled with eternal love; all our will steadfast in a changeless and blissful union with His own. To behold Him unveiled, and to have power to love Him; to be with Him in manifest presence, and to be like Him in the soul of our inmost life,—this shall be our eternity; this is everlasting Life.

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SERMON XXII.

THE INTUITION OF FAITH.

2 Cor. iii. 18.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

ST. PAUL here contrasts the revelation given by God through Moses, with the revelation given by the Word made flesh. The first was given to one alone; Moses alone saw the skirts of the divine glory, and spoke with God in the mount: we all behold His glory, and have access through the Son to the Father. Moses, after speaking with God, had need to put a veil upon his face, for the people could not bear even the reflected brightness of God's Presence: St. Paul says, "We all with open face" behold it. The Word made flesh has both revealed to us the glory of the Lord, and has given to us the power to look upon it: "God was manifest in the flesh." He is "the brightness of His glory, and the express

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image of His Person;"[1] "the image of the invisible God:"[2] He "dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."[3] But this revelation upon earth was transient; it had passed away when St. Paul wrote these words. Yet though past, it was not withdrawn: though hidden, it was yet revealed. "The glory of the Lord," in Christ, is an eternal revelation, open still to us: "We all with open face" behold it now.

By faith we stand before the throne, out of which go forth "lightnings and thunderings and voices;" by faith we dwell continually in the presence of the Divine Majesty. The Son hath returned unto the Father, and His visible presence is no more seen. But "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[4]

Let us first see what is this great sight, "the glory of the Lord." It is fourfold. First, there is the glory of His Godhead—eternal, infinite, invisible, all-wise, all-mighty, love, wisdom, and power; the glory of the Divine Personality, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; "the Father made of none, neither created nor begotten; the Son of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but

[1] Heb. i. 3. [2] Col. i. 15.
[3] St. John i. 14. [4] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

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begotten; the Holy Ghost of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding." This is the essential glory of God, inhabiting eternity, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."[1]

And in this glory, descending from the uncreated to the manifestation of Himself, is the glory of the Word made flesh. "God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world, and man of the substance of His Mother, born in the world; perfect God, and perfect man:" two natures in one Person, never to be divided; who having "by Himself purged our sins," hath sat down, with the stigmas of His passion, upon the throne of glory, of whose "kingdom there shall be no end."[2]

This is the glory of God, before which the spirits of love and the spirits of knowledge cry "Holy" evermore, which angels worship, and the whole heavenly court adores; the mystery of the eternal Three, one God, blessed for ever, revealed in the Incarnate Son.

But around this beatific vision, and from this

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. [2] Heb. i. 3; St. Luke i. 33.

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Incarnate Presence descending, is the glory of the kingdom of God, the throne and government of the Incarnate Son, to whom, when He laid "the government upon His shoulder,"[1] the Father said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."[2] "Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: . . . and round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. . . . . And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints."[3] "And I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell in the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season." "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden cen-

[1] Isaiah ix. 6. [2] Ps. xlv. 7. [3] Rev. iv. 2; vii. 11; v. 8.

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ser; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."[1]

What is this vision which was unfolded to the sight of St. John in Patmos, but the glory of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ? To the prophet it was an object of vision; to us an object of faith. He beheld it as it is revealed to the orders of saints and angels in heaven; and he saw the angelic ministries of power and grace, by which the elect of God are sealed and gathered into His unseen rest. What is this but the kingdom in which apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all saints, reign with Christ—the invisible head and source of the spiritual kingdom, both in heaven and earth, ever multiplying and expanding its fulness, as from age to age it gathers in the generations of the faithful from our lower world?

And what is the visible Church militant on earth but the outskirts and lower sphere of this ever-enlarging mystery of grace, here in its faint beginnings, sinful and mortal, there sinless and redeemed from death? This, too, is the glory of the Lord.

[1] Rev. vii. 9-11; viii. 3, 4.

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He that sitteth upon the throne "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."[1] He who filleth all in all, visible in heaven, as touching His manhood, is present, though unseen on earth, in the undivided fulness of His incarnate personality. The Lord Jesus Christ reigns by the direct exercise of His divine government throughout heaven and earth. He has knit together "the services of angels and men in a wonderful order," and out of earthly elements created sacraments of grace. The Church in heaven and earth is one: the twofold manifestation of His glory on either side the veil. The invisible and blessed part of the Church which has gone before us with the sign of faith, and rests in the sleep of peace, is an object of faith, because wholly withdrawn from sight; but the Church on earth is as yet partly an object of sense. We see it and converse with it, behold its worship, kneel at its altars, touch its sacraments, handle its mysteries. And yet it is not an object of sense only, but also of faith. For what is its visible order but the manifestation of the presence of the Holy Ghost? What are the gifts of regeneration, the invisible operation of visible sacraments, the spiritual illumination and guidance of the Church, the power of prayer, the commu-

[1] Rev. ii. 1.

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nion of saints, the mutual love and intercession of all members of Christ's body, the pledges of the resurrection,—what are all these but realities issuing from the incarnation of the Son, laws of His mediatorial kingdom, descending from on high into "all places of His dominion," manifold miracles issuing from the one great miracle of His perpetual presence, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail?

And, lastly, what are all these degrees of glory but revelations of the moral glory of the Lord; that is, of the love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ? This is the central light, of which all other glory is the brightness and the radiance. This is the image of God as seen of angels, revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; into the likeness of which every faithful soul is changed by the Spirit of the Lord. The divine character of God, and the human character of the incarnate Son; the love and sanctity, the humility and meekness of the Son of Mary, God and Man in one person, our Redeemer and our example. He created us by His power, and now, through faith, changes us by His Spirit, making us like unto Himself, and will "change also even the body of our humiliation, that it may be like unto the body of His glory, by the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

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This, then, is the glory of the eternal God, the blessed Three, the holy One, the glory of the Son of Man, the glory of His kingdom and His character, both in heaven and earth. And all these together make up but one divine and spiritual reality, which through our baptismal creed is as truly proposed to our faith as the world we see is presented to our sight.

Now St. Paul says that we, as members of Christ, behold all this manifold glory "as in a glass," as if it were a direct object of vision, and that by beholding it we are changed. It has an assimilating power; and that which makes us capable of its transforming influence is our beholding it "with open face." What, then, is this power of vision, this spiritual sight, by which the unseen is visible; in one word, what is faith? It is the power which the Son of God has given us to behold the glory of the Lord.

But we are asked, What is this power, this faith, which is given to us?

The controversies of these later ages have committed two evils: they have dethroned the object of faith, and have degraded faith itself. Faith is something more divine than disputants believe. Some will have it to be a speculative assent to truths revealed; and some, to correct them, will have it to be a principle of moral action; and

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others, to set both sides right, join together these two definitions in one, and tell us that faith is a principle of moral action springing out of a speculative assent to truths revealed. As if faith were something partial and fragmentary, the action of half our being; an effect without a cause, or with a cause simply human, and within the natural endowments of the human intelligence. Surely all these alike, if not all equally, come short of truth. We might as well say that sight is a belief of things seen, or that sight is action arising out of a belief in what we see. What are these but the effects of sight demanding and pointing to a cause? They are the consequences of sight, not sight itself. So action and assent spring from faith; but what is that cause or power which is before both the assent and action of faith? What but faith itself? And what is it? Faith is a spiritual consciousness of the world unseen, infused into us, in our regeneration, by the supernatural gift of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."[1] He needs a divine power of intuition implanted in the soul and terminating on the world unseen, as sight is a natural faculty of perception terminating on the world we

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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see. And faith is that power of spiritual perception analogous to sense, that is, to sight, hearing, and feeling; and also to affection, that is, to love, fear, and desire. It is as wide as the whole soul of man, uniting it in one continuous act. As our waking sense checks our irregular thoughts, and subjects us to the conditions of the world we see; so faith brings the whole spiritual nature of man under the dominion and laws of the unseen kingdom of God. This supernatural gift was infused into us as a habit by the Spirit of God; but in its acting it depends upon our will.

Now to make this somewhat clearer, let us take it in order.

We have by nature two powers by which we attain to knowledge, and two objects upon which these powers terminate. Revelation and regeneration have superadded a third object and power, which embrace and perfect the other two.

By nature we apprehend this sensible creation by sense. Sensations are the beginning of knowledge, as to this visible world. And sensations are bounded by the limits of sense. They cannot reach beyond the horizon of sight, hearing, feeling, taste, and the like.

But we have a higher power directed to a higher object. We have intellect, which terminates upon the intellectual world. And by intel-

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lect we interpret our sensations; we perceive such objects as cause, relation, proportion, substance, and the like. Intellect is a higher power than sense, and corrects its errors. Phenomena are the objects of sense; ideas are the objects of the intellect. The ideal world is a reality which informs the world of sense. To the phenomena of creation intellect adds at once the idea of God, not so much by inference as by consciousness, that is, by a concurrent perception.

But revelation has proposed to us another and higher object—a world of spiritual realities; and regeneration has infused into us a power to apprehend it. Sense gives us the perception of the visible world; intellect its interpretation, namely, the power and perfection of God; faith, the mystery of the Godhead. Intellect corrects and exalts sense; faith corrects and exalts both. To take an example. Sense beheld in Jesus of Nazareth a man; intellect, a man endowed with supernatural powers; faith, the Word made flesh. The judgments of sense and of the intellect were true, but inadequate: faith included and corrected both, exalting them to a spiritual intuition. Take another example. The blessed Sacrament to sense is bread and wine; to intellect a symbol; to faith the Body and Blood of Christ. Or, once more, to sense the visible Church is a society of men; to

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intellect an organised and historical kingdom; to faith it is the heavenly court on earth, the beginning of the new creation of God.

The consciousness of spiritual life unites itself with the presence of God, and in Him is united to the proper objects of faith, that is, to things unseen. And therefore faith has been defined as the perfection of the will and of the intellect—of the will as it sanctifies, of the intellect as it illuminates, of both at once as it issues in its congenial fruits. It is one all-penetrating, manifold, wakeful, energetic power, like the principle of life itself, universal, quickening, and prolific. Acting towards God, it issues in trust, love, prayer, contemplation, worship; towards man, in charity, gentleness, self-denial; upon ourselves, in abasement, discipline, and penance.

When it draws motives of action from the unseen, it is "the victory which overcometh the world;" when it dwells with fixed and confiding desire upon the kingdom of God, it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" when it conforms our will to the will of God, it is the transforming intuition which changes us "into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." It works in all the workings of our nature, taking up all our natural powers, restoring to each its original per-

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fection, uniting them in conscious harmony with God.

But this infused gift of faith, like all gifts of God, is subject to the will in man. It is the matter of our highest probation. It may be used or abused, matured or neglected, made perfect or perverted. It may be quenched, until it dies down into a mere consciousness of spiritual agony; or it may be sustained by its proper acts and energies upon the objects of faith, upon God, and the mysteries of His kingdom, the Word made flesh, the heavenly court, the real presence of Christ on earth, the perpetual mystery of Pentecost, the grace of sacraments, and the effusion of the Spirit of God.

If, then, our salvation depends upon beholding this glory of the Lord, and if the power to behold it be a gift entrusted to us by God, depending for its exercise and for its very existence on our will, then how may it be unfolded and matured?

First, by purifying the conscience. The gift of this spiritual consciousness is implanted in us by baptism; but the sin which still dwells in us perpetually sends up exhalations of its sensuality. As these prevail, men live by sense, and "walk after the flesh;" and in that proportion the regenerate consciousness is obstructed and stupified.

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It becomes deadened and inactive. This is what we call unbelief. Not that Christians do not believe in God and Christ and judgment to come; but that they are insensible: what they believe has no power to alarm or to persuade them.

They so develop the consciousness of self and sin, of the flesh and of the world, that they become habitually unconscious and insensible towards the world unseen. I do not mean absolutely unconscious, for none except the imbruted actually lose consciousness of God and judgment. The sinful retain a consciousness which is their scourge and torment; the remembrance of a world beyond the grave, in which every holy power is arrayed against them, is their anguish. They cannot shake it off. Day and night it haunts and clings to them. It holds them with a frightful tenacity; for St. James says, "The devils believe, and tremble."[1] A regenerate soul, in rebellion against the spiritual light within, has a power of wickedness greater than that of mere humanity. This accounts for the intense malignity of regenerate sinners. They have a twofold capacity of evil, both of the flesh and of the spirit. And they have a twofold measure of remorse. The spiritual consciousness is keen and vivid in its sense of fear and pain; it is the gnawing of "the worm that dieth not." It

[1] St. James ii. 19.

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wraps them about as the flame which never shall be quenched.

We can see at once the effect of gross sins in destroying this gift of sanctifying and enlightening consciousness. But we often fail to purify our conscience from the infections of more refined evils; and yet these are almost equally destructive to the intuition of faith. We may see this in what we call worldly men. The action of the world deadens the keenness of their spiritual perceptions; the habit of fixing attention on objects of sense and of intellect has a tendency to draw the mind from the objects of spiritual contemplation. The external eye is busier than the internal, and draws all thoughts after it. We all know that familiarity with the outward world makes men unimaginative, dry, and matter-of-fact; they become bounded by sense, and by the round of daily experience and events; they live in habitual forgetfulness of the unseen.

We see this in ambitious men. Forecasting and keen-sighted as they are for the doubles and changes of political life, they seem wanting in the very faculty of realising the kingdom of God. This world dazzles and intoxicates them; they become excited in their career, and concentrated in their aim. Every thing bends to it; all is lost in it; all beyond it is nothing to them. The least event,

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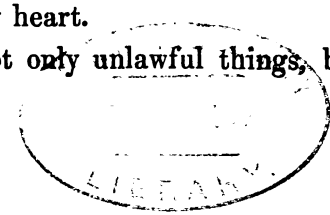
chance, or probability, will summon up all their power, and launch them in long and obstinate struggles. But the Word of God, which smites as a hammer, and the certainty of judgment soon to come, fail to move them. The same is true of all intense application of mind, as in professions, science, literature, or business; the over-wrought and weary mind loses its inwardness, and becomes passive and external. It forfeits also its sensitiveness, and comes at last to perceive nothing but that which powerfully excites it. This is specially true of the love of money; both in getting and hoarding, its rust passes into the soul. The same is true also of a life of pleasure; nothing more deadens and relaxes the fibre of the mind, and wears out its perceptions. The languid and exhausted soul grows too heavy to dwell on the invisible. The noise, hurry, and perpetual excitement of self-indulgence wastes away the deeper and finer senses; then a refined selfishness turns all the powers of the mind to minister to itself. It becomes absorbed in the one thought of self-pleasing and self-worship. Every thing high and true is too severe and real for its softened and shrinking touch. No unbelief is nearer to practical atheism than the unconsciousness of a frivolous and worldly heart.

It is not only unlawful things, but also lawful



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things in unlawful measures, which dull the consciousness of things eternal. A life of God's best earthly gifts may so overgrow the soul as to make it dim and insensible. Friends, possessions, happiness, fill up the heart, anticipate every wish, clog every desire, and bind the soul by fond and tenacious affections to home, its gifts and joys. There is no craving for another state, when this is so full of pleasures. Such men have no desire to wind up this daily happiness and to depart. Life has too many pledges; eternity is too severe. These things, too, cloud the inward vision, and draw a veil over the objects of faith.

This must be purged away, if we would waken up our spiritual consciousness of God and the kingdom of His grace.

A single cloud, even a film of conscious sin, dulls the spiritual sense. It closes its sight for fear, and shrinks from the realities which condemn it as it beholds them. Then darkness thickens over the soul, and hangs as a veil between it and the presence of God: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."[1]

A clear intention is the very life of the consciousness of God and of His kingdom. And this clear intention of the heart is to be attained only by habitual self-examination and penitent confes-

[1] St. Matt. vi. 23.

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sion, made under the eyes in which the heavens are unclean.

This is the first and absolute condition to beholding "the glory of the Lord."

2. The next is, a habitual use of spiritual exercises, such as meditation and prayer, whether mental or in words, and the like. By spiritual exercise is meant specially, an exercise of the will awakening the consciousness of our spiritual life. Reading and thought are almost passive states, so far as concerns the will. Emotions and desires we cannot control; but the will is our very self summed up in a continual energy or act. Prayer is chiefly an act of the will. Both desires and thoughts often flag and wander, while the will is steadfast in prayer. It is by such an exercise of the will that the intuitions of faith, and the actings of faith, are awakened and matured; for faith, as we have seen, is a moral habit, having its root in the will. If we will, we can realise spiritual things; or, if we will not, all is impalpable and dark. Truth is truth *to us* only when we perceive it. The unseen world is a reality to us only when we are conscious of it. The whole Catholic faith, the worship of the Church, the discipline of spiritual life through devotions and sacraments, has no existence for us, until we have united our spiritual consciousness with them by acts

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of faith and of the will. Catholic tradition can only propose these things from without; pastors can only provoke or stir us to personal acts of faith.

There is one severe and absolute condition to our knowledge of eternal realities; we must know them by our own experience and intuition: "God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."[1] Therefore so few worship Him indeed. There are many kinds of religious character, but only one has the true faith which beholds "with open face." Some Christians are conscientiously formal; some faultless in their intellectual views of truth; some full of devout emotions and sensations: but all these may alike fall short of the calm, severe, penetrating, and spiritual insight of faith.

It is not difficult to find the reason of this. Religion has touched this or that part of their nature,—the conscience, the intellect, the emotions,—but has passed lightly over the will. They have exercised the conscience, intellect, and emotions, but have left the will undisciplined and immature. Therefore they complain of weariness, coldness, and weakness. The objects of faith are faint, and wield little power over them, because the inward consciousness is languid and dim. This is the reason why their prayers are so broken and

[1] St. John iv. 24.

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lukewarm. They are the occasional conditions of their heart, not the occasional utterances of an habitual intention.

Without mental prayer and the exercise of the will, all devotions fall into a mechanical recitation. The mere intellectual habit of dwelling on unseen realities seems altogether wanting in many minds. They find it no hard task to listen, or to read, or to pass ideas in rapid succession across the eye of their mind; but to dwell steadfastly on any one thought, such as sin, judgment, the love of God, the passion of our Lord, and to hold it fast by repeated meditation and sustained reflection till it has awakened a response in their personal consciousness, seems to many people intellectually impossible. Their mind appears unable to poise itself so long upon a solitary thought. As soon as it begins, it wavers and falls into distraction. They are variable and restless, passing and repassing from truth to truth without realising any; and what we do not realise is as powerless as a shadow.

But if the unseen world have no transforming influence over us, this world will surely and deeply conform us to itself. All things around play upon us: all the day long its incessant and importunate activity warps us into its own mould and inclination. We become sensual, or intellectual, or formal; familiar with truth, but without feeling; full

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of sensations and emotions without stability, of aspirations without attainment, of intentions without perseverance. And why? Because the object of faith finds no intuition or response in our consciousness or in our will.

Let us, then, make it part of our daily life to exercise ourselves in acts of faith, hope, and love; that is, to dwell on these, and on the motives from which they spring, till our spiritual life has taken their form and direction. Every day we should endeavour to renew the decaying perceptions of our hearts, by recalling the realities of our baptismal creed, and making them a part of our inward life by deliberate acts of will. And all the day long our endeavour, and at least our habitual intention, ought to be to realise the presence of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of His heavenly court, until we live before Him with a sustained consciousness of His nearness, that He is our Life, and that we dwell in Him and He in us, ever changing us "into the same image from glory to glory" by the power of His Spirit.

3. And the last and highest means of perfecting the gift of grace is, to exercise it habitually upon the real presence of our blessed Lord in the Sacrament of His Body and of His Blood. For this very end it was ordained, that when He should withdraw His visible presence, He might

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still abide with us unseen; that when He ceased to be an object of sight, He might become an object of faith; and that the spiritual consciousness of our hearts should there for ever meet with the reality of His presence. The holy Eucharist is the point of union between what is subjective and what is objective in our life of faith. It is in itself an object both of sight and of faith. In the sphere of sense it is unchanged; and of all matters subject to its cognisance, sense is an ultimate and absolute judge. But the realities of the unseen world are not subject to sense; they are objects of faith alone. And that holy mystery is what it is made by the consecration of the Son of God. It represents to us His Incarnation, Sacrifice, and Death. It presents to us the realities of His Body and Blood. It applies them to us by His Divine power, and incorporates us with Himself. As an object of faith, it is made what it is called by consecration; *to us* it is what it becomes, whether unto life or death, by our faith: we can neither make nor unmake its objective reality. We have power only over our manner of receiving it. It stands as the visible witness of the world unseen: a supernatural object in the midst of this natural order; "the glory of the Lord" "as in a glass," yet beheld "with open face."

In this divine mystery the order of the new

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creation of God is visibly set forth. What the Church does on earth, our only and true High Priest does in Heaven. The blessed Eucharist is the earthly counterpart of the altar, seen in the apocalyptic vision. We offer the Lamb of God in a mystery. It lies slain upon mount Sion. The great oblation of the cross is a perpetual propitiation, ever fresh and all-prevailing before God. In the holy Sacrament it is exhibited and applied. The whole work of redemption is there visibly proposed to our faith. The incarnation of the Eternal Word: the love of the Son of God: His quickening death: His body wounded, His blood shed for the life of the world: our incorporation in His mystical body: His true and substantial union with us: our participation of His divine nature: our perpetual sustenance by His presence, who is the Resurrection and the Life,—all these compass us about; we are in their presence and in contact with them. This is the closest access to which we are now admitted with the Presence of Christ. Since our regeneration, no other mystery so intimately grafts our life upon the eternal world. It is the food of the new creation; the bread of angels; the power of the world to come. To those who believe in no series of supernatural facts linking the mystery of our Lord's incarnation with the resurrection of the saints, holy

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sacraments are mere solemnities, expressive rites, or, as some in secret feel, tedious and unmeaning ceremonies. No wonder that natural men lift the heel against the visible sign of an invisible presence, and deride the mystery of a divine incarnation. It is a pride akin to that by which it is believed that angels fell. They would not adore the divine manhood: the faithless will not believe it. To such high hearts our altars must be an empty ritual. To us the blessed Sacrament is substance and life. It reveals to us the glory of redeeming love: "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Herein is pity, that the Son gave Himself to be born and die; that He came down to us in our flesh; that He comes down to us in His compassion, veiled in a mystery. All His tenderness, patience, pardon, are there. The fulness of His divine love and of His human sympathy draw us to His feet.

Be often, then, before the altar. Let holy communion be, if it may, your daily bread—the holy Sacrament your daily meditation. Look through the transparent forms which for a while hide Him from your sight. Muse upon His presence, His nearness, His indwelling. Exercise your faith, and awaken the conscious affections of your heart towards Him, humbling Himself to you within the

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sphere of your infirmity, that He may exalt you to the kingdom of His glory. Yet a little while, and all veils which hang between heaven and earth shall be taken away, and you shall behold the King in His beauty, not as now "in a glass darkly," but "then face to face," when all desires are fulfilled, and all "the pure in heart shall see God."

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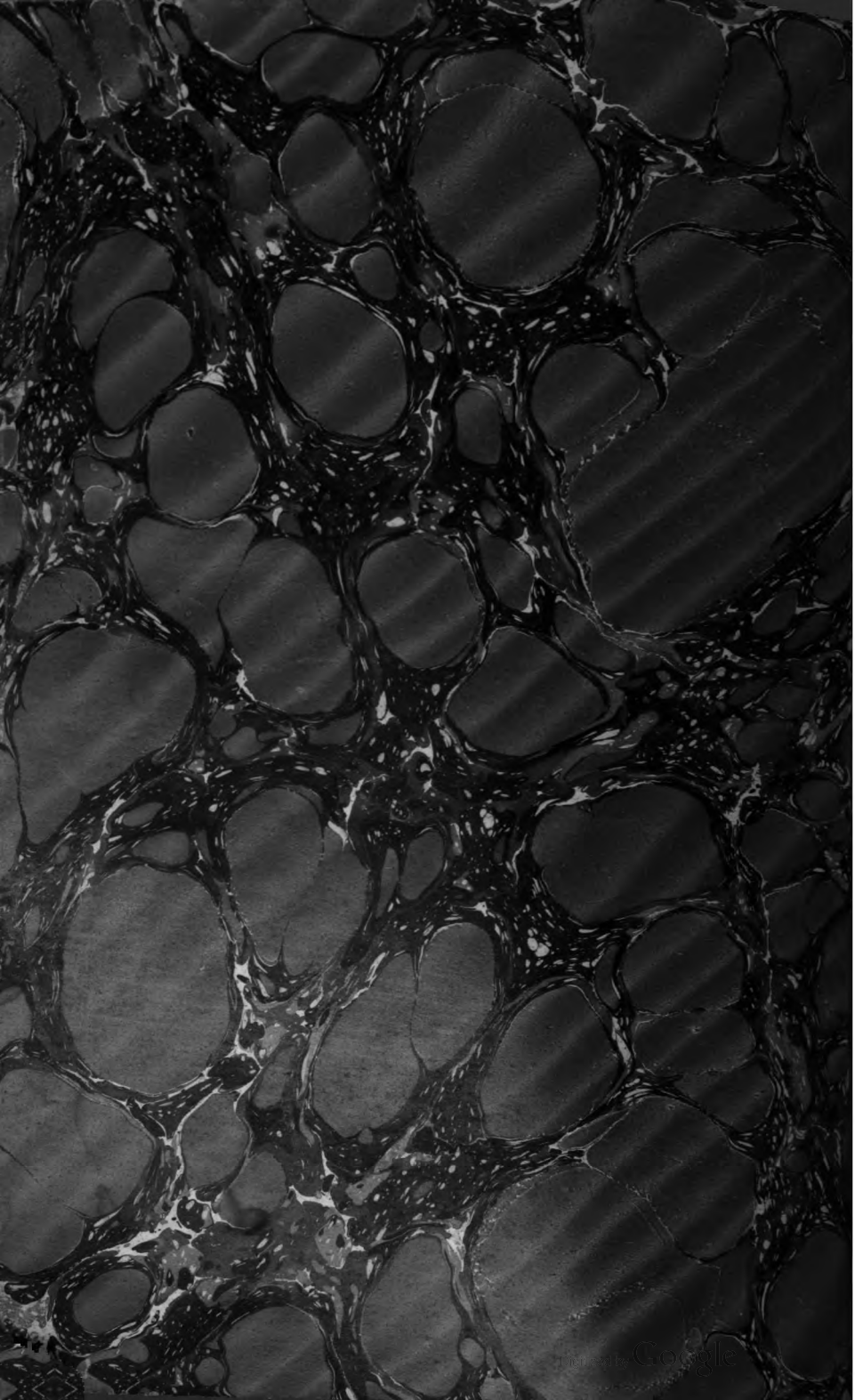

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